

Aistear

Creatchuraclam na Luath-Óige
The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework



**Learning experiences for
full and part-time daycare settings**

Learning experience 2: The beat of the drum**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 2****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Home and full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Gloria moved to Ireland from North Nigeria three years ago. She speaks English and helps out in the toddler room on a Tuesday morning every two weeks. Her grandson Lee (2½ years) has been attending the crèche since September and is in the toddler room. On each visit, Gloria brings along something from North Nigeria for the children to see, play with, and learn about. These items are all familiar to Lee. Today she brings an African drum. She plays it while she sings an African song. The children gather round her. Some sway and some clap while others dance to the beat. Lee and some of his friends join in with some of the repeated words and phrases. Afterwards, the children take turns to play the drum. Next time, Gloria plans to play some outdoor games with the toddlers. Sorcha, the room leader, takes a few minutes of video which she shows the children after Gloria goes home.



Reflection: In what ways can I involve parents and grandparents in giving the children rich experiences?

Learning experience 5: The newsletter**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers and young children****Setting: Home and full and part-time daycare (nursery)**

The staff of the Happy Start Nursery have made a welcome pack for parents of new children. The pack includes the nursery's mission statement and information about how the staff support children's learning and development. They also send home a short newsletter each month so that parents know what songs, stories and activities the children are doing. Children are involved in deciding what information is included. An example of a recent newsletter available in English, French and Polish (the main home languages of the children) is included below. The staff also plan to use text messages for parents who want to receive reminders about events in the nursery.



Reflection: How can I share more information with parents about what their children are doing in my setting?

See the newsletter on the next page.

May 2009

Doing Great Things Together!

Happy Start Nursery: Senior toddlers and pre-schoolers

Our day out in the woods!

A big thank you to all the parents who came with us on our trip to Glengarra woods. A great day was had by all. The children tell us that they enjoyed the trip on the bus and the picnic the best! They also loved splashing in the puddles in their wellies. Since our return we have been learning about the trees and flowers that grow in the woods. We have also begun to learn about making honey since we discovered the bee hives hidden in the corner of the woods. Mr Mackey, who supplies honey to the local shops, is visiting the pre-school on **June 12**. He will bring some honey and show a video of the bees. Why not join us at 10 a.m. that day?

Photos of the Glengarra trip are on display in the main hall.

Time for more stories

We are going to the library as usual on the **last Friday of this month**. Thanks to the parents who came with us last month.

Have you spotted our bus?

Since the children enjoyed the trip on the bus to Glengarra Wood so much we decided to make our own bus. Thanks to Darren's daddy who gave us some lovely big cardboard boxes to work with. After much hard work we now have our own colourful buses complete with steering wheels, horns and seats. To build on the topic of transport Ava's mam Nora is coming in next week to talk to us about her job as the driver of the primary school bus. Many of the children in the pre-school will be travelling on this bus when they start school in September. Nora will be here at 10.30 on Thursday morning **May 14**. Come along if you can and stay for a cup of tea/coffee afterwards in the parent room.

Rhymes

As you know we always include a nursery rhyme or a poem in our newsletter. This month the children asked us to give you the words of the song, *The Wheels on the bus*. They'll teach you the actions. Hope you enjoy it.

- The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round,
- The wheels on the bus go round and round, All through the town.
- The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish ...
- The doors on the bus go open and shut ...
- The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep ...
- The gas on the bus goes glug, glug, glug ...
- The money on the bus goes clink, clink, clink ...
- The people on the bus go chatter, chatter, chatter ...
- The wheels on the bus go round and round ...



Look who has a birthday in May

Rarish Obert will be 2 on May 1st.

Sharon O'Brien will be 3 on May 7th.

Fiachra Long will be 4 on May 15th.

Kia Mihas will be 5 on May 17th.

We hope you all have a lovely birthday.

Important date for your diary

During the **first two weeks in June** we hope to meet you and your child for a short while. Your child will show you his/her portfolio so you can see what he/she has been doing and learning through the year. If the time and date don't suit please contact Michelle on 084 6655437.

Learning experience 20: I did it, I stood up!**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 4****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home, and full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Baby Daniel (10 months) is learning to pull himself up to a standing position. Monica, his Key Worker, is watching closely nearby. Daniel has tried several times to pull himself up by holding on to a roll-along toy but as soon as he grabs it the toy tends to move and Daniel slides back down on the floor. He is starting to get frustrated. Monica describes what Daniel is doing, *You are trying to stand up on your own, aren't you?* She encourages him to persevere by smiling at him and telling him how well he is doing. *I think we could stop these wheels moving*, she suggests as Daniel falls again. She encourages him to try once more by showing him that the toy will not roll because it is now locked. Daniel grabs onto the toy again and slowly pulls himself up. He screeches with delight at Monica once he stands upright. Monica affirms his achievement by clapping her hands, describing what he has done and calling to her colleague to come and see. Her close proximity and keen interest act both as physical and emotional supports. She takes a photograph later in the day of him standing which she shows to him and uses to again describe his great achievement. She also shows it to his dad when he is collecting him that evening. She then puts it on display in the hallway with the date and a short description of the endeavour! Daniel's mam stops to look at it in the morning when she drops him off, and talks to him about what he did. They exchange smiles.



Reflection: How can I encourage children to persevere with difficult tasks?

Learning experience 25: We can decide**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Young children****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (after-school)**

The children go from the infant classes of the primary school to the after-school club. Ray, the after-school worker, helps them to plan their activities. He tries to promote an atmosphere of democracy and independence. There is usually a flexible structure to the session with outdoor time, one or two group activities indoors (one decided by Ray, the other agreed on by the children), free play, and then a group activity before going home. A meeting is held with the eight children and they negotiate what they will do for the 2½ hours before their parents collect them. Direct access to the outdoor area is not available, so children go out as a group for activities that Ray has organised or for a particular activity or project they have decided on themselves. During the free play session children can choose from a variety of resources and materials, for example the computer area, the pretend area, the arts and crafts area, the sand and water area, the construction area, and the quiet area with books and jigsaws.

Ray has a magnet board on which each child can stick his/her photograph and/or write his/her name. The children put pictures of all the activities they intend to do during the session beside their names and/or photographs. Ray keeps a close watch to make sure that the children are experiencing a range of activities. Before going home the children come together again as a group to hear a story or to sing songs, and to talk about what they have done.



Reflection: How can I involve children more in deciding what they do in the setting?

Learning experience 26: Our place**Theme: *Well-being*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Diane is the manager of the baby room in a crèche. She and her assistant Monique give special attention to structuring the environment for the six babies in their care. They talk to the parents, observe and talk to the babies, and plan accordingly. Diane and Monique check regularly that everybody is safe and happy. They provide toys, natural materials, and items from home of different textures, colours, shapes, and sizes in order to stimulate the babies' senses. They display photographs of the babies and their families on the walls with the babies' names and words like *mammy* and *daddy* beside them. Some babies have photographs of their pets on the wall too. The double doors to the garden are often open and there is a ramp for babies who want to crawl outside. The less mobile babies are often placed near the window so that they can watch what is going on outside. There is a garden seat, as well as roll-along toys, rugs, and a variety of other toys and equipment to play with. All the toys and equipment are routinely checked for safety and added to regularly so that each baby's interests are extended. Diane and Monique position themselves near the babies at all times, and use a key worker system so that each baby is cared for by the same person as much as possible.



Reflection: Do I make children feel welcome and motivated to explore and discover?

Learning experience 29: Jelly play!**Theme: *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Darragh (14 months) and Ian (16 months) are playing outside. Susan, their Key Worker, makes some red jelly, and when it is set she gives it to Darragh and Ian to explore. The boys are sitting on a rug beside a sheet of paper which is stuck to the grass. Susan scoops out a little jelly and offers it to Darragh and Ian. Ian is eager to get his hands on some of the jelly and squeals to make sure Susan knows he wants it. Darragh doesn't appear to be interested. Ian rubs his jelly into the paper and is delighted to see red marks appearing. Susan makes some marks of her own. *You are having great fun with the jelly, aren't you Ian*, she comments, *What about you Darragh would you like to try some?* Darragh watches Susan and Ian and puts his hand out tentatively towards the jelly. Susan encourages him to explore it and to make marks on the paper with it. Darragh watches as Susan makes long red lines on the paper. Susan is observing his reactions closely. She kneels beside him and helps him to make a mark. She describes the jelly and Darragh and Ian's mark-making activities. Darragh puts some of the jelly in his mouth; he likes the taste of it and has another piece. Ian follows. After a few minutes Darragh starts to take pieces of jelly out of the bowl and offers some to Ian. The boys place the jelly on the paper and then pick it up to put it back in the bowl again. Darragh and Ian become engrossed in what they are doing. Not wanting to interrupt their concentration and thinking, Susan sits quietly beside them. Ian and Darragh's body language and the smears of red jelly on their faces show that they are loving the experience!



Reflection: What new experiences can I provide for children which will capture their curiosity and encourage them to try new things?

Learning experience 33: Come and sort with me**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Rachel, a childcare worker, sits on the floor of the baby room with Ciara (12 months) and Jack (14 months) and helps them to play together putting the shapes into the shape sorter. She interacts with them playfully and models the act of sharing the shapes while commenting, *Look, Rachel puts in one shape, Ciara puts in another and then Jack puts in one.* As the children imitate the actions demonstrated by Rachel, she continues to describe what they do while using their names. If the children make an effort to say each other's names Rachel supports their attempts, affirms the efforts, and models saying the name correctly.



Reflection: Can I do more to model good interactions for children?



Learning experience 39: Lots of different families

Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 2

Age group: Young children

Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)

Today the children in the local crèche are making pictures about their families. When they're finished their pictures their room leader, Dervla, asks them to tell the other children at their tables about their picture. Amer draws a picture of his mummies and his big brother. Alan paints his mammy, daddy and dog. Diarmuid draws his daddy, and his mammy with a big tummy with a new baby inside, while Emma draws her mum and pet gold fish in their home and a picture of her dad and his other family in their house. Dervla kneels down beside each pair. She listens, comments and sometimes asks a question. Through this experience the children begin to develop an appreciation of differences in each other's home lives and families.



Reflection: What can I do to help children see difference as part of life?

Learning experience 42: Helping me join in the fun**Theme: Well-being, Aim 2 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Sessional service (special pre-school), and full and part-time daycare (nursery)**

The toddlers in the nursery spend a lot of time outdoors all year round. Some of the children who are quite shy and timid inside become much more active and enthusiastic outside. They run, climb the ladder, go down the slide, kick football, play in the outdoor café, get fuel for their vehicles at the pumps, play with the water and sand, and cycle their tricycles. The staff members play *Hide and seek* with them, organise races, play football, join them for a latte in the café, and chat about what they are doing and learning. On cold days they all dress up warmly in their coats and hats before going outside, and on wet days they splash in the puddles in their wellies and listen to the rain fall on their tinfoil covered umbrellas.

Daniel (almost 3 years) attends a special pre-school three mornings a week. He joins the children in the toddler room in the nursery on the other two days. He can't move any of his limbs so is reliant on the staff to carry him outside. He squeals with delight when they lift him up in the air and when they put him on the slide. The staff talk to Daniel, building up and reinforcing his language, spatial awareness and physical skills, saying, for example, *Now Daniel, you are up, up, up ... now down, down, down*. They place Daniel on the ground and put a ball beside his head. He gets great pleasure from moving the ball slowly with his head and getting it right under the bench. They say, *Well done Daniel ... under, under the bench*. These physical experiences help Daniel's gross motor development and enable him to understand spatial concepts like over/under, up/down, and in/out. The other children regularly run over to Daniel and gently push the ball to him or wave at him. He smiles and giggles when they do this.



Reflection: Do all children in my setting have opportunities to get involved in and enjoy play?

Learning experience 46: Fire, fire!**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 5****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (nursery)**

Cáit (nearly 3 years) attends a nursery while her parents work. Cáit's daddy is a fireman and she often talks about him in the nursery. The room leader asks Cait's daddy, Mike, if it would be possible for the nine children in Cait's room to visit the fire station. Mike organises the visit and the children really enjoy the trip. They sit on the engine and get to hold the hosepipe.

The children discuss their visit on returning to the nursery. They talk about the fire engine, what colour it is, how many wheels it has, how it gets the water, and who drives it. During the course of the week they sing songs and read stories about fires and fire engines, and make siren noises and draw pictures of fire engines, fires and fire-fighters. They make models of the fire engine with play-dough. They sort red items to match the fire engine and they play with the small world figures and vehicles to create their own emergencies.

The room leader provides the group with a series of large boxes for them to make their own fire engine that they can sit in. She helps them to cut out windows and doors and to paint it. They love sitting in it, and make siren noises and dress up as fire-fighters. One day during the free play session some of the children decide that the room is on fire and they use the old mobile phone to call the fire brigade. The children are very familiar with what to do having undertaken a fire drill on many occasions. They ask

the room leader to get the register to make sure everyone is accounted for and they all move over to a corner of the room that is well away from the fire. Help comes quickly when two fire-fighters jump out of the fire engine with hard hats and a large hose pipe. The fire is quickly quenched and the room leader is firmly reprimanded for starting the fire!

Over the next few days the staff and children work together to display photographs and paintings and pictures of their trip, alongside their fire engine, for their parents to see.



Reflection: What trip can I organise in the coming weeks to support the children's learning and development?

Learning experience 49: Valuing our languages**Theme: *Communicating*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Pema's mother Marta is keen that Pema (17 months) grows up able to speak both Polish and English. Pema's grandpa, Thomas, from Poland has come to stay with Marta and Pema for a month. As always, he brings some new books and toys for Pema. This time he brings a doll with long black hair. They name her Paula. Every afternoon Thomas, Pema and Paula sit together in the kitchen reading the new books. Thomas proudly points to the pictures and names them in Polish. Pema copies him and looks at him with delight as he smiles to affirm her efforts.

Pema attends the local crèche from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. three days a week while Marta works. This morning Thomas, Marta and Pema are walking together to the crèche. Pema and Paula are in the buggy. They have time to stop and point to interesting things along the way: a dog, an ambulance going by with its siren flashing, flower sellers, and the church. Thomas takes time to name the objects and describe them in Polish as Pema points and attempts some of his words. Thomas repeats the words, nods, and smiles to encourage Pema.

When they arrive at the crèche, Aveen, the practitioner greets the family with 'hello' in Polish. Marta proudly shows her father the family wall where there are photographs of all the families in the crèche and a welcome sign in the mother tongue of every child. Marta and Thomas give Pema a kiss and a hug and Aveen takes her to the window so she can wave bye-bye before they play with Paula.



Reflection: Can I do more to bring the children's home languages into the setting?

Learning experience 50: I love to dance and sing**Theme: *Communicating*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (nursery)**

Emily (2½ years) is a shy, quiet little girl. She attends the local nursery everyday while her ma, a lone parent, works. When she dances in the nursery Emily's whole expression changes and her sense of happiness and delight are clearly communicated. She particularly enjoys the songs, *I'm a dingle dangle scarecrow* and *Five fat sausages*. She also loves singing and doing the actions for *I'm a little teapot* and *Ring-a-ring a rosy*, particularly when they are sung in Latvian. She and her two special friends, Victoros and Seán, fall about the place laughing at the end. Victoros loves to hear his home language being used in the setting and starts to talk excitedly in Latvian when he hears it in the nursery rhymes.

Emily also enjoys it when the room leader suggests they take out the musical instruments. She loves marching around the room with her friends making lots of music and noise. She loves it, especially, when she gets the opportunity to do this outside. Máire, the room-leader often makes video recordings of the children's music making and dancing so that the children can share these experiences with their parents. Expressing herself in a variety of ways is important for Emily. Although her mastery of language is excellent she is quite reserved when interacting with other children, yet she loves to dance and move to music.



Reflection: How can I help children express themselves in a variety of ways?

Learning experience 55: The power of music and story**Theme: Exploring and Thinking, Aim 3 and Learning goal 4****Age group: Young children****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Abi (almost 4 years) has Down syndrome and attends her local crèche. The staff use music a lot during the day. They sing a special chant to ease transitions from one activity to another and use upbeat songs to raise energy levels, especially during the afternoon. Mella, the room leader, notices that Abi responds very positively to music. Abi helps tidy up energetically when they sing the tidy up song. She loves it when they sing the welcome song, *Hello Abi, how are you today?* (going through the names of all the children). She smiles and takes a bow when her name is sung.

Abi especially loves it when they sing, *When you're happy and you know it*. She becomes very animated and responds enthusiastically. Mella also uses lots of language play to help Abi and other children with their language development. They play rhyming games and Abi laughs when her friends make up jokes and nonsense words. She also loves to listen to tongue twisters.

Mella uses creative storytelling to introduce the children to new words and ideas. She wears a special storytelling hat and cloak to help everyone get into the mood for stories. The children sit on beanbags. Mella sometimes uses music for her storytelling. She tries to match pieces of music to the stories. Abi loves this part.

With help from the children and their families Mella has developed a range of props which she places in a story bag to help bring stories to life. For example, in the bag (a colourful pillowcase) there might be four or five props that connect with the story. These might include small world people, transport and animal figures, pieces of fruit, pictures of characters with their names printed underneath like *The Gruffalo*, *Alfie* or *Spot the dog*, key words printed in large font like *Not I said the pig, not I said the duck* in the story of *The Little Red Hen*, masks displaying different feelings, pieces of cutlery, a baby doll or teddy bear, a hat, shoes, items of clothes, different types of food, a flash lamp, a stethoscope, keys, a mobile phone, coins, photographs, toys such as a puppet fox or a cardboard cut out for the *Gingerbread Man*, vegetables such as a turnip for the story, *The Enormous Turnip*. The list of props is endless! Mella also tries to include a factual book that relates to the story. It might be about the country that the story is set in, a book on gardening, a book on sports or animals. Mella's local librarian is a great help to her in sourcing all her books. Abi is always enthralled listening to the story and wonders what Mella will produce next!

**Reflection: What play props can I use to bring stories to life?**

Learning experience 57: Look Mia, I did it too!**Theme: Well-being, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Mia (13 months) and Josh (11 months) are playing side by side on the floor. Taking turns, they lift objects including wooden spoons, colanders and lids, show them to each other, and screech with glee. Mia notices a small chair close by and speedily crawls to it. Pulling herself to her feet she grabs the back of the chair and pulls herself onto the seat. She smiles, screeches and claps her hands in delight at her accomplishment. Not wanting to be left out, Josh slides on his bottom to the chair. Wanting a turn at sitting on the chair, he shouts loudly at Mia and waves his arms. The two babies become upset—Mia not wanting to leave the chair and Josh wanting to sit on it. Their shouting gets louder. Deirdre, their Key Worker, has been observing from a distance and joins them. She places a second chair close to Mia's. Josh makes his way to it and grabbing the back of the chair, pulls himself to his feet and tries to get onto the seat. He falls back to the floor. He pulls himself to his feet again only to fall once more. Deirdre observes from a distance and offers gentle encouragement to Josh: *You can do it, I know you can.* Screeching a little, he pulls himself to his feet a third time. He looks carefully at the seat and noticing the handles, grasps these and pulls himself onto the seat. Delighted, he looks towards Deirdre and Mia screeching loudly and bouncing on his seat.



Reflection: Do I give children opportunities to set and pursue their own learning goals?

Learning experience 63: I want that cube**Theme: *Well-being, Aim 4 and Learning goal 2*****Age group: Babies****Setting: Full and part-time daycare (crèche)**

Miriam, the crèche room leader, is encouraging Liam (10 months) to crawl. She knows he can do it as his mum has told Miriam about him crawling at home. For some reason he rarely crawls while in the crèche. Miriam places the sorting cube, that Liam loves to play with, out of his reach. It is near him although he will have to move closer to get it. Within a few seconds he shows his frustration as he yells and shakes his hands. He looks at Miriam as he yells louder. Miriam crawls to the toy and encourages him to crawl too: *Let's crawl together, will we?* She places the cube a little closer to him, all the time modelling crawling and encouraging Liam to have a go. He loses interest and picks up a spoon close by and bangs the floor with it. After lunch, as Miriam plays with another baby in the room, she observes Liam making one or two false starts at crawling. She moves a little closer so she can observe him better. He moves onto all fours and reaches forward while balancing himself with the other hand to grab the cube. Eventually, he makes it and Miriam claps her hands as he reaches the cube. Meanwhile, Lisa, the room assistant, recorded the achievement on video while Miriam observed and stayed ready to assist Liam if necessary. Miriam claps hands and congratulates Liam on his achievement. Liam claps too and laughs loudly. He proceeds to play with the cube. Miriam shares the footage on the video recorder with Liam's parents that evening and notes his achievement in his Record of Care. Over the coming days Miriam provides lots of opportunities that encourage Liam to crawl, and by the end of the following week he is delighted with his new mobility and the options for exploration that it brings!



Reflection: How can I use observations to greater effect in supporting and encouraging children to set their own learning goals?