

# Self assessment on child learning environment



## Part A

Reflecting on a child's learning and development as a practitioner is important in order to gauge an understanding of the child's ability to learn and how it can be continually improved. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) developed a curriculum framework, known as Aistear, which supports practitioners in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings to reflect, identify and assess children's learning.

Assessment of the child's learning allows the practitioner to gather an understanding about how the child thinks, their abilities, and interests.

For a practitioner to understand and assess a child's thinking, abilities and interests they must interact with the child. Good assessment practices depend on listening, empathising, watching and talking with the child (Dunphy, 2008). It is through these types of interactions in everyday activities and experiences with the adult and other children that help form a successful learning process for them.

In order to plan and develop appropriate experiences which the child will find enjoyable and exciting, it is important that the practitioner has a good assessment process in place in the ECCE setting. Through observation the practitioner can assess the child's progress and develop a plan to continually enhance the child's development further. It is up to the practitioner to interpret the child's learning using the aims and learning goals outlined by Aistear to then form and plan the learning further. The practitioner must observe to note children's progress in all areas of their development including skills, dispositions, attitudes, knowledge and understanding (NCCA,

2009). Development through planning is done through two assessment approaches defined in Aistear which include the assessment for learning and the assessment of learning. Assessment for learning takes the approach of supporting and planning the child's learning through reflection and assessment whereas assessment of learning is the approach of measuring, comparing, analysing and reporting (Daly and Forster cited in Mhic Mhathúna and Taylor, 2012). These approaches use many different methods of assessment. Each method helps to create portraits of the children's learning and development.

Observation is a key method in assessing a child's learning. Observing a child allows the practitioner to physically see the child's capabilities and document their learning. It allows them to see where the child excels or where they may need further support. It can also show a practitioner how a child interacts in social situations and how they play. While many practitioners use this as their main assessment method it is not the only one. Through the use of different assessment methods the practitioner can form a bigger picture of a child's learning and development. Aistear outlines the five assessment methods; self-assessment, conversations, observations, setting tasks and testing (NCCA, 2009).

Self-assessment consists of the children themselves assessing their own learning and development. The child can begin to identify their own achievements and progress. It is then up to the practitioner to help guide the child and discuss with them about their experience. Discussing and having conversations with the child allow the practitioner to further assess and gather a better understanding of the child's learning (NCCA, 2009). By using <https://assignbuster.com/self-assessment-on-child-learning-environment/>

conversation as an assessment method the practitioner can gain a better insight into the child's thinking than they would from just observing, thus allowing the practitioner to offer the appropriate support for the child. These assessment methods so far discussed are very child lead assessment. It is the child who shows the practitioner their learning and development with the practitioner acting as an observer.

Observation can also be adult lead assessment as well as setting tasks and testing. If the practitioner needs to collect information on certain aspects of the child's learning they may design certain activities to help them do so (NCCA, 2009). Through observing, the adult can design activities which interest and excite the child to help them further gather information they may have set out to obtain. From setting these tasks the practitioner can help explain and encourage the child to further their learning and development. This is similar to the assessment method of testing. The assessment should focus on strengths and also aspects which may need further improvement (Dunphy, 2008). The practitioner compares all they have learned through observing and discussing with the child to test the child on certain aspects of their learning and development, such as social abilities. This can allow the practitioners to compare the outcomes with other children of similar ages therefore allowing them to see which children are meeting their milestones and who may need further assistance. There is a huge necessity for these assessment methods because without them the practitioner would not be able to understand or have the information needed to assist the child appropriately to develop into a well-rounded holistic child.

While using Aistear as a framework to help with good assessment practices in ECCE settings the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education developed the quality framework Síolta, which also promotes good assessment practices. Síolta was designed to assess and support ECCE settings to continually improve the environment for which the child learns and develops. Síolta aids the practitioner to reflect upon their own role assessing themselves to ensure they are providing quality experiences for every child (CECDE, 2006). As well as reflecting upon themselves it allows the practitioner to assess the environment, equipment, curriculum and interactions, all areas which assist in children's learning and development. While assessing the child helps create portraits of their learning and development it is also important to use frameworks, such as Síolta, to assess the learning environment. Without an appropriate educational environment which engages, assists, challenges and offers the child different experiences then a child will not learn and develop to their full potential.

## Part B

### Lesson Plan for Spring

Month:           Febuary/  
                      March

Weekly Plants &

Theme: Flowers

Type of Montesso

Setting: ri/Aistear

Room: Pre-School

Age of

Childre 3-5

n:

Rationale for topic: A child brought a flower to the setting which prompted the other children to want their own flowers.

Lesson Plan 1 - Hand Print Flower

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> Febuary Number of Children: 8

Dispostions developed: Persistence, responsibilty, investigative, Curiosity, Fun, independence.

Rationale for choice of activity: Allow the children to express themselves creatively through visual arts using paint. Make marks to record their own idea of flowers.

Long-term aim: To develop their abilities to express themselves creatively, express their imagination and to refine fine motor skills. Develop a connection between flowers and spring.

Aistear Link Codes:

WB COM ET

A3 A4 A3

LG1 LG2 LG1

Síolta Standard: *Standard 6*: Play Component 6. 5 encourages him/her to explore, be creative and use previous learning to make new meaning.

Material and/or equipment needed: White paper, various colour paints, paint brushes.

Plan: To begin the practitioner will demonstrate how to create a flower using your handprints. The practitioner will paint their hand using a paint brush, printing it in a circular motion around the page then using their fingers to paint the other parts of the flower. Once the practitioner has demonstrated to the children how to create the flower, the children are invited to explore

the materials and create their own concept of a flower. Children will be able to choose their own colours and method to create their flower.

Reflection: The activity went well as the children actively engaged with the idea of the activity, each creating and exploring their own idea of a flower. They demonstrated curiosity as they printed their hands on the page at different angles to make marks with the paint. The children each used different methods to paint the flower. Some imitated the practitioner while others just used their fingers or the paintbrush. I then noticed (P) had painted squares at the bottom of the page and asked them ' what did you make when you did these'. (P) told me ' There flower pots, my mammy has lots of flowers in flower pots'. This then got one child particularly curious asking me ' where do flowers grow' and ' how do you make flowers'. I told them how flowers grow from seeds either in the ground or they can be planted in a flower pot. The children then shifted their focus from the painting to the discussion and each child shared their idea on how flowers grow.

Critique and Evaluate: As the children all wanted their own flower, I set them a task to design their own. They showed confidence in their ability to independently paint their own hands and design their own flowers with the different methods they chose. By setting the children the task they have demonstrated the aim of the activity, to express themselves creatively by making marks to record their ideas. Setting the task enabled the children to choose their own colours acting upon their curiosity to explore different marks and experiment with different colours. During the task the children took the lead during the natural occurring opportunity of one child asking  
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questions about where and how flowers grow. This prompted all the children's curiosity as they all moved their focus from painting to get involved in the discussion. It is important when using the method of setting tasks outlined in Aistear as an assessment method that going forward I use their questions about the flower to continue their interests in planning the next activity.

## Lesson Plan 2 - Plant Flower Seeds

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February Number of children: 8

Dispositions developed: Responsibility, Curiosity, independence.

Rationale for choice of topic: During painting our own flowers the topic of where and how do flowers grow was asked. Planting the seeds and physically watching the flowers will help give the children a better understanding of where and how they grow.

Long-term aim: The children will be able to have a better understanding of working theories of where and how the flowers grow. It will also develop the disposition of responsibility as the children will need to care for their flower to help it grow.

Aistear Link Codes:

WB

IB A4 ET A2

A3

LG4 LG3

LG5

Síolta Standard: *Standard 7: Curriculum Component 7. 4. 1* - What strategies do you use in implementing the curriculum/programme? - Example being facilitating the children's interest.

Material and/or equipment needed: Flower seeds, flower pots, soil, gloves, hand shovel and water.

Plan: The practitioner will demonstrate how to plant the flower seed. The children will then be given the hand shovel taking it in turns to spoon soil into their flower pot. Using their finger they will place a hole in the middle of the soil and place the flower seed into the hole covering it over. Once the seed is planted, the children will then use a jug to water the seed. While planting the practitioner will discuss how we care for our plant and what it needs to grow.

Reflection: This activity went really well as the children really engaged and showed interest. They demonstrated great independence and manipulation skills as they spooned the soil into the flower pots with great control. (B) did struggle with spooning soil into the pot and (S) demonstrated great care 'I'll help you do it' as she assisted (B) to get the soil in his pot. (S) then went on to discuss with the other children what they had to do next assisting each of them. Once the children had planted their seeds I discussed with them what the plant needed in order to grow. I asked 'I wonder what the seed needs to grow'. (B) said 'you pour water on top of it' while (A) contradicted (B) telling them 'No you just put it in the pot'. I then said 'you're both right the plant needs water and soil to grow but it also needs sun. Where should we put the plants so they can get sun?'. The children looked around the

room (S) shouted to everyone ' the sun is at the window look' as they decided we would place our pots here. (B) then reminded everyone ' we forgot the water let's put it on top' the children took turns watering their plant. I discussed with them that the plant will grow roots and drink the water in the soil but this seemed to confuse them especially (B) who kept telling everyone that you pour the water on top of the plant.

Critique and Evaluate: The link with Aistear's method of assessment using conversations is evident during this activity as the children took turns in talking, listening and discussing their ideas with each other. It is also evident as I responded to the children agreeing with both (A) and (B) as we discussed and I gave feedback about what the plant needed. I also used conversation to prompt the children to share their ideas using an open ended question about where was best to place the flower to get sun therefore aiding the children in expressing their own views and making their own decisions, which Aistear's Identity and belonging learning goals outlines. Through conversing with the children it has given them the opportunity to expand on their own knowledge about how to care for materials in their environment and what they need to survive.

Lesson Plan 3 - Experiment: How plants drink water using food colouring.

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March-3<sup>rd</sup> March(observed the flowers over a few days.)

Number of Children: 8

Dispostions developed: Investigative, Curiosity, Fun.

Rationale for choice of activity: The children will be able to see the food colouring stain the flowers as it absorbs the water helping them develop thinking skills as they can come to an understanding of plants absorbing water.

Long-term aim: To continue their interests about flowers and give the children a better understanding about how the plants absorb water.

Aistear Link Codes:

WB A3    ET A1

LG 1     LG4

Síolta Standard: *Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation* – Enriching and informing all aspects of practice within the setting requires cycles of observation, planning, action and evaluation, undertaken on a regular basis- the activity planned is from observing and evaluating the children's interests and taking action to plan according to their needs and interests.

Material needed: Food colouring, flowers, jug, and water.

Plan: Under the guidance of the practitioner, the children will fill a jug with water and place some flowers in the jug. They will then add food colouring into the water and place the flowers in an area of sunlight. With this activity the flowers need to be observed over a few days to observe the flower changing colour from absorbing the stained water.

Reflection: The initial activity was short and prompted many curious questions from the children such as ' why is the water green' ' how will they

drink that' ' how will it change colour'. After discussing and answering their questions the children were eager to move on and conduct the experiment. They demonstrated their independence as once provided with the materials and instructions about what and how we were going to do the experiment, they supported and enabled each other to carry it out. I then observed the children as they continually went back to the flowers that day watching to see if they had changed colours. The following day, upon arrival the children raced to the flowers screaming with excitement to see that one of the leaves had green spots on it. (B) ' look everybody its gone green' (S) ' the plant drank the green water' (P) ' it drinks it from the bottom'. Over the next few days the children still continued to have interest over the experiment as I observed them going over to look sharing it with the other children and even their parents.

Critique and Evaluate: From watching and listening to the children I observed how excited and involved they all got while discussing and carrying out the experiment. Using observation as an assessment method has allowed me to see how the children express their excitement and awe using their language, gestures and facial expressions. From taking a step back and observing the children I could see how the children expressed their feeling and thoughts with each other and their excitement to involve their parents. Using observation as an assessment method has shown me that building on the child interests to help them make sense of the world truly excites them.

(See appendices for photographs of the activities.)

### Part C

Using the topic of spring, the assessment of the activities helped to plan further activities based on the child's interests. Aistear's outlines the features of good assessment practices which involve collecting, documenting, reflecting and using the information (NCCA, 2009). In each activity, the assessment of the activity benefited the child as it built on the child's past experiences which they shared to support the development of new learning. From collecting and documenting the child's interests, it allowed a portrait of the child's interests, abilities and knowledge to be assessed and used to plan further experiences which would help the child/children develop. From using the different methods of assessment such as setting a task, conversations and observation it allowed for appropriate activities to be planned according to the stage of development and interests the child/children were at. Observing over a period of time during the how plants drink water experiment highlighted how excited the children got from watching the plant change colour sharing the information with parents. This allows the parent to gain an insight into what the child is interested in which can be further developed outside the classroom. In each activity the children developed the disposition of curiosity. Their curious nature engaged the children to get involved in the painting, planting and experimenting. The activities also showed evidence of the children's knowledge developing as while planting the children believed that pouring water on the top of the flower helped it to grow were it then became clear during the experiment that they absorbed water from the bottom. From planning the activities, to observing the children while implementing them and using Aistear's different assessment methods to record and reflect on the experience, it gives a

portrait of the child/children which helps the practitioner to continually provide and enhance future experiences to help develop a holistic child.

## References

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