

# Early learning environment | reflective essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

- Marie Grey

## Reflective Diary

### Introduction

For this reflective diary portfolio I have chosen to talk about two completely different activities, one outdoor and one indoor. The outdoor activity promotes holistic development in many aspects which I will discuss within the reflection and the main factor which affects this activity is the environment. In the indoor activity it also promotes different areas of holistic development which I will also discuss in the portfolio below in more details. The main factor here is relationships, family life or community and also social factors. I feel I have learnt a lot throughout this module. In regards of the learning environment and how important it is for the overall learning or development of a child. The environment plays an important role within the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) setting.

In my opinion the environment as a whole includes the centre, areas, indoors and out, materials, curriculum and everything that surrounds or affects the child. Practitioners have a duty to provide a warm, safe, encouraging, supporting, friendly environment for each child to help them develop holistically and to their full potential. Age appropriate activities, materials, equipment, books and games are very important. Why I mention these areas, if the children are doing activities or have materials that are for younger children than them. They will stay at the developmental stage they are currently at without progression. On the other hand if the materials/equipment is suitable for older children they will have difficulty. For

example if a 3yr old is doing a puzzle suitable for a 6yr old, it may be too hard for the child. They may become frustrated and gain a dislike for puzzles or lose interest altogether missing out on learning opportunities.

Daily routines are equally important in their own right I have learned through this module how routines affect children. Daily routines are in place for the benefit of both staff and children. It benefits staff so they have an overall goal for the day to work towards. Also it allows staff to get the work they need to do done within a certain time-frame. How I think it supports and helps children, is by giving the structure and a sense of time, as children do not fully understand the concept of time. This makes it easier for them to identify what time of day it is feel it helps the day feel less long for those who are there for a full day. Also routine is important for pre-schoolers to prepare them for school.

A big one which I feel is very important in every setting and in life would be equality and diversity. I have learned ways of promoting this. By doing activities and discussing different cultures with the children. It is very important to promote these areas as there are lots of different family types and cultures attending our settings. Space is very important for children. They need space to run around, explore, play and do activities. If there is limited space children haven't got the freedom to play comfortably and grow as individuals. Also I find some children do not like others in their personal space and get very upset when others are too close to them. To prevent unnecessary anxiety a spacious area where a group can play comfortably is ideal. I will discuss further about areas I have gained more understanding

and knowledge about and also my personal, professional and working as part of a team.

### Activity 1:

The first activity I am going to talk about is an outdoor activity. It is called the Parachute. This activity involves a big colourful parachute with a group of 2-4year olds and also adult involvement. The reason for this activity is to promote well-being, thinking and exploring, communication and identity and belonging. While also supporting the learning and holistic development of each child while having fun doing so.

Before I started this activity I informed the other staff members about what I was going to be doing and I asked them if they had a parachute on the premises in case I needed to get one. They had one already, so I proceeded into the storage room and took it out the back. I shook it out and checked it for health and safety matters to make sure it was ready and safe for use with the children. When I came back in it was time to get the children ready to go outside. When their coats where on I told them I had planned a fun activity out the back garden for them to play. They were very excited. We proceeded out and I called the children down to where I had set up the activity in the most spacious part of the garden. All the staff and children joined in on the activity and we had lots of fun doing it. The children threw balls onto the parachute and we lifted it up and down to try get the balls back off again. Then the children ran under the parachute while the staff manoeuvred it up and down for them. When they were finished the activity their play didn't stop there. Some of the children wanted to put the parachute on top of the

play house. When they asked if they could I simply said “ of course you can”. The children where then leading the activity themselves. I decided it best if I just stood back and let them enjoy and lead their own play.

### Impact on holistic development.

#### P. I. L. E. S

- Physical- The activity helped strengthen muscles, Hand-eye coordination, Gross and fine motor skills. The children were using their hands to grip/hold the parachute. Using bigger muscles in their arms moving them up and down.
- Intellectual- Imagination, thinking of new games, ideas, leading their own activities.
- Language-Communicating with each other, discussing ideas for games, learning new words such as “ Parachute”. For children who have not done the activity before.
- Emotional- I feel this activity had a calming effect as the children saw it move in the wind. Also being outside would impact their well-being and relationship building within the group.
- Social- As this was a group activity it impacted on the children socially, they needed to share the parachute and work together in order for it to move.

### Learning opportunities.

The learning opportunities that occurred during this activity where the development of concepts such as moving the parachute. Learning what is high and low, fast and slow, up and down, under and over. How this affects

the children's overall holistic developmental, the activity is promoting all areas of P. I. L. E. S. The affect can differ depending on the development of each child. Where some may be advanced for example in their physical development such as their fine motor skills, others may be more advanced in their cognitive development or intellectual development, understanding the above concepts better. In my opinion the affects it has on the child's holistic development are beneficial. The activity is also providing the children with time to be out in the fresh air and giving them some exercise. Which will benefit the whole child and their well-being.

### Factors

Environment- The outdoor environment provided freedom and space, the weather was nice, sunny, dry and slightly windy so the parachute could take flight! If there had been no wind the activity wouldn't have gone as well.

### Activity 2:

The second activity was an indoor activity. A family tree/wall. This activity involved a group of four children at different times. This activity in my opinion supported each child's identity and belonging, well-being, communication, and also thinking and exploring. It also supported each child's holistic development such as language, social, emotional, physical and intellectual as well as other factors that affect the child such as family and peers or community. I started by informing staff what I was planning to do and see if they had the materials I required. I discussed with the supervisor a time to carry out this activity and we agreed to break up the groups into four. The children involved were between 2-4 years. I started by

drawing a big tree, cutting it out, sticking it to a cardboard background to stiffen it. Then I mixed up some brown paint and called groups of four children down to the back table to paint. Each child got a branch or part of the trunk to paint. I then got the groups to draw their hand for the leaves. I cut them out, the children coloured them and drew their family on each fingertip. I could not use photographs for this activity because of personal reasons regarding a particular child.

### Impact on holistic development

#### P. I. L. E. S

- Physical-The children were using paintbrushes and crayons. These impacts on their fine motor skills, strengthening their hands and pincer grips.
- Intellectual- The children had to concentrate on the activity, think about their families, and count family members.
- Language- The children talked about their families, the colours they were using, their pets, and communicated with each other.
- Emotional- I feel this impacted the most as the children expressed how they felt through their creativity and speech talking about people in their lives that played a big role in their lives. Their family.
- Social- It was a small or intimate group and the children socialised very well together. Talking and discussing the activity. Sharing the materials.

### Learning opportunities.

This activity provided the children in my opinion, the opportunity to learn and explore different ideas on families and cultures. It also allows them to discuss their families and cultures or traditions. They have been presented the opportunity to learn about types of family structures such as one parent, two parent, same sex, adoptive/foster or any other types of families the children may have. Even pets in their family. Siblings and grandparents. They can discuss their own backgrounds and learn more about cultures and beliefs from each other. In my opinion this affects the holistic development of the child in many ways such as, how they connect or socialise with others in groups. The child as a whole is not only just their P. I. L. E. S but also their personality, environment, values, culture and experiences.

### Factors

Social/Culture- I feel a factor that affected this activity was social/culture and community/family. How this affects in my opinion, the children expressed their feelings about their families and home life. This has a big impact on children as the family/guardians/parents are the prime care givers they affect every aspect of the child's overall development and well-being.

### My personal and professional needs.

Personally I have learned to be more confident and trust my own judgement more. Also to observe more and stand back letting the children lead their own activities' feel more confident to share my ideas and opinions.

Professionally I have learned to use different ways and approaches with children when it comes to behaviour feel I have progressed professionally and I am more confident to lead activities and communicate my ideas with



staff feel I can work more professionally within a team and I am able to work on my own intuition with confidence that I am doing a good job and using best practice. I also feel I have helped other staff members identify their learning needs by giving them advice and ideas on their own learning, as there are some staff doing their Fetac level 5. I try to help them in any way I can by recommending activities and books that may help them. Personally I feel I need to learn more about each child's interests so I can create more activities that they will benefit from. Also I need to do more research on areas of development and how the factors that affect children.

Professionally I need to learn more about each family and their cultures or beliefs so I can help the children explore these areas within the crèche. I feel it will benefit myself and other staff members involved. In a professional sense I feel I have learned a lot, but still have a lot more to learn.

#### Working as part of a team and maintaining professional conduct.

*“ Practising in a professional manner requires that individuals have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to their role and responsibility within the setting. In addition, it requires regular reflection upon practice and engagement in supported, ongoing professional development .”* (Siolta Standards 2014)

In my opinion it is very important to work professionally . Towards parents and staff members working effectively and in a professional manner shows external people how you use best practice in your setting. How you as an individual represent yourself, the setting and the standard your service provides. In order to maintain good professionalism you must be able to

work and communicate efficiently and efficiently with your team, management, children and parents.

Respect is very important, to be professional I feel you must have respect for your colleagues, management, parents and children. Being respectful of other people's ideas/opinions, backgrounds, choices, even if you may not agree with them or have the same values. Treating people with respect and consideration of their personal beliefs and cultures is very important and shows good professionalism. Staying supportive within your team can resolve or even prevent conflict or clashes with co-workers. Being supportive of their ideas and views can reflect on how the job is done. Working in a team is vital in childcare and practitioners may need support emotionally as well in some cases where the job or stress of the job may overwhelm some team members. We may need support ourselves one day and it's nice to know your team are behind you to encourage and support you no matter what the situation may be.

Building a good strong working relationship with your team not only benefits you and the team it also benefits the little people you are caring for. Again respect comes up, we are role models for the children we care for and if they don't see us being respectful and supportive towards each other, how can we expect them to respect us or each other. What you put out there you receive back.

Confidentiality and trust are equally important in their own right. We must be professional and use confidentiality in all areas of working. Towards parents, staff and children this is vital in childcare. Equality is important in any

profession especially childcare all involved should be treated as equals whether you are only starting your career or are the leader/supervisor/manager or most experienced.

In my opinion if trust is lost or you become known as untrustworthy your professional career and relationship with all involved will suffer. When trust is gone it can never be replaced. (Class notes Team Leadership: 6N1948).

Trusting your team's judgement is also very important, it helps the team prosper and grow knowing you trust and have faith in their decisions. All the areas I have discussed will help the team become stronger as a unit, therefore making it easier to provide the best possible care you can for the children and the support the parents may need whether they ask for it or not they will know it's there when they need it.

*“ Effective team members promote self-expression of ideas and feelings about group problems and operations. The staff members are candid and seem to know how other staff members feel about topics or issues being discussed.*

*Ineffective teams avoid discussion of personal feelings or ideas. The general attitude is that discussion of feelings is inappropriate or potentially dangerous.” (homesteadschools.com 2013)*

## References

Siolta the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education ' Standard 11: Professional Practice' cited on:

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Fisher, Kenneth. (2013)\_ "*Leading Self-Directed Work Teams: A Guide to Developing New Team Leadership Skills* [Online], Available at: <http://www.homesteadschools.com/lcsw/courses/TeamBuilding/Section10.htm> [Accessed 11th November 2013]

(Class notes Team Leadership: 6N1948) unpublished 2013