

Aistear

Creatchuraclam na Luath-Óige
The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework



Identity and Belonging:
Learning experiences

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 6: Paul's daily diary

Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 1 and Learning goal 5

Age group: Young children

Setting: Home and infant class (special primary school)

Paul (5 years) has moderate general learning disabilities. He goes on a bus every morning to attend Holy Angels' Special School seventeen miles from home. His parents rarely visit his school because of the distance, so they and his teacher use a daily diary to keep each other up-to-date on how Paul is getting on. This means that his parents can talk to him about what happens at school and can reinforce his learning at home. It also means that his practitioners are able to take what happens at home into account, as Paul has difficulty communicating this himself.

Paul was very excited recently when his family got a new puppy. His mam wrote about this in his diary. His teacher used this information when planning his activities for the week. Paul screeched excitedly when Miss O'Malley knew the name of the puppy and he seemed to really enjoy it when she read him a story about a sheepdog working on a farm. An example of an extract from Paul's diary is included below.



Reflection: What special arrangements can I put in place to share information with parents I don't often see?

Figure 2: Extract from Paul's daily diary

February 28

Hi Fiona

Paul had a poor night's sleep. Seemed fine when he came home from school. Had his tea and we went for a walk with him in the wheelchair. Toby, the puppy came too. As usual Paul had his bath and we read him a story but for some reason he never settled. He may be tired in school today. I know I am!

Regards

Aileen

February 28

Thanks Aileen. Jackie, Paul's physio did a session with him today. I told her he might be a little tired. She did some gentle exercises with him and when she brought him back to class he seemed very tired so we put him in the quiet area with his teddy and his blanket and he went for a short sleep. He had a good lunch and seemed in good form after that. He's still enjoying the books about animals. He's also getting very good at knocking the towers of blocks with his head and your practice at home is really showing. Hope you sleep tonight.

As always, give me a call on 087227569 at any time,

Fiona

Learning experience 7: Showing empathy**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Young children****Setting: Home, childminding and infant class (primary school)**

Mike, a widower visits his daughter Saoirse's school today to hear how she is getting on in senior infants. The school has a policy of giving parents a written mid-year report in February at the parent/teacher meetings and again towards the end of June. This is Mike's first face-to-face meeting with Saoirse's teacher. His wife Mary used to look after all contacts with the school. Saoirse's childminder, Niamh, drops and collects Saoirse from school every day while Mike is at work and she fills Mike in about how things are going at school. She knows Saoirse's teacher well and has an informal chat with her regularly, especially since Mike asked her to do this for him. The school has been very good about supporting Saoirse since her Mammy died five months ago. Miss Buckley, Saoirse's teacher, has been in regular phone contact with Mike since then. However, Mike is still a bit nervous about the meeting.

Miss Buckley immediately puts Mike at ease and reassures him that Saoirse is doing very well. She goes through the report card in detail with him and regularly asks him if he has any questions. She also shows him samples of Saoirse's work on display on the walls, in her books, and in her portfolio. She shares some photographs with him. Two of these show Saoirse minding two babies while playing with a friend. The caption beside the photographs reads, *Don't worry Lucy. I'll look after you.* Miss Buckley explains that Saoirse and her friend were pretending that Lucy's mammy was sick and died. She asks Mike how Saoirse is getting on at home and he tells her about the things she enjoys and the things that she finds hard, now that her Mammy is gone. Miss Buckley gives Mike the report card to take home and tells him to call or to send in a note if he wants to talk to her about Saoirse. She reassures him that she will continue to keep a close eye on Saoirse and that she will give him a call in a few weeks to give him an update. She re-emphasises that Saoirse is doing well in her learning and is coping well at school after losing her Mammy.



Reflection: Do I give enough thought to the events and circumstances in families' lives which can impact on children's learning and development?

Learning experience 11: Do you understand my culture and traditions?**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Home and sessional service (playgroup)**

Joseph (2 years and 11 months) and his family are Travellers. They recently moved to the area and Joseph's mammy, Kathleen, enrolled him for two mornings a week in the local playgroup. The manager, Joan, meets with Kathleen and explains how the service works and shows her the different rooms and the outdoor play area. Joan asks Kathleen about Joseph and his likes and dislikes. She explains that she knows very little about Traveller culture and traditions. Joan asks Kathleen to tell her a little about their way of life and the Traveller traditions that are important to her. Understanding these will help the staff to support Joseph. Kathleen tells Joan that as a family they generally travel in their trailer during the summer months and settle in one area for the rest of the year. She also explains that most Travellers are not as nomadic as they used to be. Kathleen says that Joseph loves animals, especially horses and dogs. She tells Joan that she doesn't want Joseph to be discriminated against because he is a Traveller. She is worried because her older children had negative experiences in other settings.

In preparation for Joseph's arrival, and with Kathleen's help, Joan gets some books and jigsaws that depict Traveller life today. She organises displays of animals for Joseph to look at when he arrives. She tells the children that a new boy is joining them. A few days after Joseph's arrival Joan talks to the children about their homes. She uses wall displays to reinforce some of the points they talk about. These include pictures of the children's homes such as trailers, flats and terraced houses. They use these to talk about 'where we live'. The children bring photographs of their families and homes, and make lollipop stick models of them using junk materials, fabrics, wool, glitter, fancy paper, and card. They display these beside their photographs. Over the coming days they enjoy sharing stories about their family, pets and outings. Joan observes the children during their activities and ensures Joseph is included and that he is beginning to form friendships. She updates Kathleen regularly on how he is settling in.



Reflection: How much do the children and I know about each other's family life and community?

Learning experience 19: I don't want you to come to my birthday party**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 4****Age group: Young children****Setting: Infant class (primary school)**

The junior infant class has children from a range of cultures including Traveller children and children from Nigeria, China and Egypt. Early in the first term the teacher, Mrs O'Reilly, notices that some children are using racist and discriminatory remarks when interacting with certain children in the class. This seems to be happening mainly at playtime in the yard.

One day she overhears a conversation in which one child says to another child, *I don't want you to come to my birthday party 'cos you're brown*. The teacher talks to both children, reassuring Zara (who moved to Ireland from Nigeria two years ago) first and talking to her about how she is feeling. She then focuses on finding out why the other child, Anna, acted in such a way. Mrs O'Reilly is conscious there may be a number of reasons for Anna's behaviour. Did the girls disagree about something? Did Anna hear someone else saying what she said? Did Anna want to hurt Zara and use her skin colour to do this? Mrs O'Reilly talks with Anna about why she used hurtful comments when playing with Zara. She explains the hurt this can cause to Zara and that it is not ok to do that. She tries to help Anna think about how she would feel if it happened to her.

Mrs O'Reilly looks for support as to how she might deal with this situation. She does some reading about young children and prejudice and discrimination. She refers to the school policy on inclusion and uses the document, *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (NCCA, 2005). She visits www.action.ncca.ie for examples of practice from other teachers in responding to conflict. She also speaks to the principal.

Mrs O'Reilly knows it is important to address this issue immediately in order to support Zara and Anna as well as the other children. She follows up in the classroom through initial work on feelings. She uses storybooks to explore 'being left out' and 'name-calling'. Through this, she and the children think about the actions and thoughts of a perpetrator, a recipient, and an onlooker to a negative situation. She reviews the images of people displayed in the classroom through posters and photographs and changes some of these to reflect a greater variety of cultures. She also sources multicultural dolls (male and female with realistic physical features) for the pretend play area as well as a variety of skin coloured crayons and paints. If a similar incident happens she will talk to the parents of the children involved. For now, she will observe closely the relationship between Zara and Anna, and will work with the whole class on making the school experience positive for everyone.



Reflection: Am I unintentionally making it acceptable for children to hurt each other through words and actions?

Learning experience 23: Wearing shorts in winter!**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Home**

Mommy is at home with baby Aoife (16 months). It is winter-time. She is about to dress Aoife so that they can walk to school with her older daughter Lorraine. Aoife leads Mommy to where she spotted a pair of summer shorts the day before and indicates that she wants to put them on. Mommy tries to explain that the shorts aren't suitable for a cold winter's day. She makes *brrrrr* sounds and rubs her legs to warm up. She points to warmer clothes, smiles and nods, and explains that these will be cosy and warm for Aoife today. Then Mommy offers Aoife the choice of wearing her navy jumper and jeans or her purple tracksuit. Mommy observes Aoife's reaction and as soon as she shows an interest in the tracksuit Mommy responds: *So, you would like to wear your tracksuit today Aoife. Oh, it will keep you nice and warm, I wish I had a fleecy one like this.* Aoife then smiles and nods her head. When outside, Mommy repeats the *brrrrr* sounds and describes how cold it is. Aoife's smile tells Mommy that she understands.



Reflection: What opportunities can I use to give children choices within reasonable limits?

Learning experience 28: A grand design for my classroom**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2 and Learning goal 1****Age group: Young children****Setting: Infant class (primary school)**

Miss O'Brien is getting ready for her new junior infant class. She divides the room into five interest areas: a messy play area (sand, water, play-dough, and paint), a pretend play area, a quiet area (library), a construction area, and a seated area with tables and chairs. She uses pictures to label the areas for the children. This year she will have four Polish children in the class. English and Irish will be second and third languages for these children. To support emergent literacy Miss O'Brien uses words in English, Irish and Polish when making the labels. She puts pictures and multilingual signs over the shelves and storage areas so that tidy-up time will be easier for everyone. She also provides welcome signs in the children's home languages, and borrows some displays of their work and family photographs from parents and feeder pre-schools.

Miss O'Brien uses colour codes to assist the children in recognising their assigned groups. She arranges the tables into five groups with a different colour assigned to each. She plans to use the colour coding to rotate and manage various activities among the groups on a daily, weekly and termly basis. She will review and vary the activities, resources and choices regularly. Miss O'Brien also hopes to move some activities like PE, group art projects, and pretend play outdoors throughout the year: at least once a month in the winter and once a week during the other terms.

Sally, a Special Needs Assistant, will be in the classroom to support Fergal who has autism. Fergal uses the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to communicate. Miss O'Brien puts a number of sequence pictures around the room to help Fergal understand what is happening and what will happen next.

Planning and structuring the environment is a very important part of Miss O'Brien's work. She knows that many changes will have to be made once the children arrive, and even on a daily basis after that, as she gets to know the children and they share in making decisions about their learning environment inside and outside the classroom.



Reflection: How can I design and organise the classroom so that the children enjoy being in it, and so that it helps them to be as independent as possible?



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 36: A problem solved**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Childminding**

Jean, a childminder, works four days a week looking after four children, two of school going age and two pre-school age. She is playing in the garden with two sisters, Aoife (2 years and 9 months) and Siobhán (nearly 4 years). Jean steps in to help the sisters sort out their problem about sharing the dolls' clothes, as Aoife is becoming very frustrated. She asks the girls what the problem is and then asks for suggestions on how to deal with it. After some discussion the girls agree to divide the clothes between them. Jean stays with the girls and talks to them about what they are doing. She encourages them to help each other and she asks Siobhán to help Aoife to put the socks on her baby doll. Jean suggests that they might pack the clothes and take the dolls on a holiday in the lovely sunny weather. Jean brings out the baby bath and the girls pretend it's a swimming pool for the dolls in sunny Spain. She encourages and acknowledges their efforts at playing together and they have great fun, ending up having a water fight between themselves and Jean!



Reflection: How can I help children to work together in solving problems and resolving conflicts?

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 45: Not quite yet please!**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Babies****Setting: Childminding**

Tess (14 months) is a shy little girl who is very sensitive to noise. She becomes upset easily and doesn't like to play with toys that pop up or that make music. She is also very apprehensive about being around other children. Her childminder, Anna, is aware of this and has made a cosy corner for Tess that is away from noise and bustle where she can play happily with books, blocks and soft toys. Gradually Anna introduces Tess to new, more interactive toys. If this upsets Tess Anna puts them away and reassures her. She also supports her in interacting with the other baby she looks after, 15-month old Amy. Sometimes Anna sits with Tess and Amy in the cosy corner. Anna introduces a teapot and cups to the girls and they pretend to have a tea party together. The girls pretend to drink from the cups and Anna gives Teddy some tea too. Tess imitates her and then offers her cup to Amy. Anna pours some more tea for the girls and she talks softly about what is happening. Sometimes Tess shows her enjoyment by smiling and displaying positive body language; at other times she begins to cry and indicates that she wants to play on her own.



Reflection: How can I help children who are shy or quiet to engage and play with others?

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 47: No, it's my turn**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 6****Age group: Young children****Setting: Sessional service (pre-school)**

A group of four young children (between 3 and 4 years) are playing outside with the bikes and tractors in the pre-school. A dispute arises. Two children approach Breda, a staff member. She talks to the group of four and asks them to tell her what the problem is. *It's my turn to have a bike*, Robert explains. *And it's my turn to have the tractor*, Jenny exclaims. *No it's not*, David shouts, *I got it first*. Claire sits solidly on her tractor without entering into the argument while Jenny tries to push her off. Breda realises from the children's comments that there aren't enough bikes and tractors for everyone. *So there aren't enough for all of you to have one each. I wonder what we can do about this*, Breda responds: *I'm trying to remember how we sorted the problem about taking turns at the computer last week. Can anyone think how?* The children start arguing again. Then Robert shouts: *I know, the egg-timer. That's how. I'll get it*. He returns a minute later with the large egg-timer to time the turns. After some discussion the four children agree to use the timer, and Robert takes charge of putting it on the step nearby so they can all see it.

Robert and Jenny set up a car wash while they are waiting. When the time is up they run over to tell the others that it is now their turn. Claire grudgingly gives the tractor to Jenny while David refuses to get off the bike. Jenny points to the egg-timer and tells David that his turn is over. He looks at Robert and hands the bike over. Breda keeps a watchful eye as the children manage to share the playthings as they agreed.



Reflection: Do I help children to solve problems and to resolve conflicts among themselves?

Eispéireas foghlama 48a: Margadh an fheirmeora**Téama: Féiniúlacht agus Muintearas, Aidhm 4 agus Sprioc foghlama 3****Aoisghrúpa:** Leanaí**Suíomh:** Rang naíonáin (bunscoil sa Ghaeltacht)

Le linn sraith ceachtanna drámaíochta bhunaigh grúpa leanaí i rang na naíonán sóisear agus sinsear, in éineacht le Múinteoir Síle, stalláí margaidh sa spás súgartha. Thugadh roinnt mhaith de na leanaí cuairt ar an margadh áitiúil feirmeora maidineacha Sathairn lena dtuismitheoirí agus bhí fhios ag na leanaí eile ina thaobh seo ó na hamanna roinnte nuachta. Fuair Múinteoir Síle frapaí súgartha, mar shampla ábhair scríbhneoireachta agus airgead, soithigh bhia fholmha, agus prócaí. Ghlan sí an bord taispeántais agus d'úsáid é mar chuntar. Ghlac na leanaí ról éagsúla agus thug cuireadh do Mhúinteoir Síle bheith ina custaiméir. Thar an gcéad chúpla lá eile thug siad boinn airgid 1, 2, 5, agus 10 cent isteach ar scoil chun

táirge a cheannach. D'fhorbair an súgradh le linn na seachtaine de réir mar a bhunaigh leanaí stalláí níos speisialaithe. Ag an bpointe sin bhí an spás sa seomra ranga le haghaidh na stalláí an-teoranta. Mhol Múinteoir Síle go bhféadadís athshocrú a dhéanamh ar na boird agus na cathaoireacha

chun spás a dhéanamh. Agus iad ar cipíní, chuidigh na leanaí léi é seo a dhéanamh. Bhí cead pleanála i bhfeidhm anois chun síneadh a chur leis an margadh! Thosaigh níos mó agus níos mó stalláí nua ag teacht ar an bhfód de réir mar a rinne leanaí nithe as taos súgartha agus de réir mar a thug siad cartáin fholmha ón mbaile. Bhunaigh siad stalláí áit a raibh a bpéintéireachta agus a mbláthanna féin á ndíol acu. Thug siad seanbhréagáin agus leabhair ón mbaile leo agus dhíol iad lena chéile. Bhídís ina gcustaiméirí agus ansin ina n-úinéirí stalláí. Chuidigh Múinteoir Síle leo comharthaí a dhéanamh le haghaidh na stalláí éagsúla. Rinne roinnt leanaí comharthaí a thaispeáin praghas a n-earraí.

Sheol Múinteoir Síle nóta abhaile ag insint do na tuismitheoirí céard a bhí ar siúl ag na leanaí agus thug cuireadh dóibh cuairt a thabhairt ar mhargadh na leanaí nuair a bhí siad ag fágáil na leanaí ar scoil nó á mbailiú. Rinne sí fistéip de roinnt de na heipeasóid súgartha. Lá eile bhain sí úsáid as an margadh chun fadhb a chur faoi bhráid na leanaí, agus d'fhiafraigh sí di féin os ard ar chóir di na boinn airgid a bhí aici a úsáid chun íoc as planda a chosain 5c (naíonáin shóisearacha) nó 10c (naíonáin shinsearacha). De réir mar a rinne gach leanbh na fíorbhoinn airgid a láimhseáil (1c, 2c, 5c, agus 10c), spreag sí na leanaí le hiniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na meascáin éagsúla de bhoinn airgid a d'fhéadfaidís a úsáid le haghaidh na bplandaí.



Ábhar Machnaimh: *Conas is féidir liom úsáid níos mó a bhaint as an súgradh samhlaíoch chun cur le forbairt scileanna litearthachta agus uimhearthachta na leanaí?*

Learning experience 48b: The farmer's market**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 4 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Young children****Setting: Infant class (primary school in the Gaeltacht)**

During a series of drama lessons a group of children in junior and senior infants and their teacher, Múinteoir Síle, set up a market stall in the pretend play area. Many of the children visit the local farmer's market on Saturday mornings with their parents and mention it during news-time. Múinteoir Síle gets play props, including writing materials and money, empty food containers, and jars. She clears the display table and uses this as a counter. The children take on different roles and ask Múinteoir Síle to be a customer. Over the next few days they bring 1, 2, 5, and 10 cent coins to school for buying the produce. The play develops during the week as groups of children set up more specialised stalls. Space in the classroom for stalls begins to pose a problem. Múinteoir Síle suggests that they could rearrange the tables and chairs to make room. Excitedly, the children help her do this. Planning permission to extend the market is now in place! More and more stalls begin to appear as children make produce from play-dough and bring empty food cartons from home. They set up a stall selling their own paintings and the flowers they are growing. They bring old toys and books from home and sell them to each other. They take turns playing customers and stall owners. Múinteoir Síle helps them to make signs for the different stalls. Some children make signs that show the price of their merchandise.

Múinteoir Síle sends a note home telling parents what the children are doing and invites them to visit the children's market when they drop off or collect the children. She videos some of the play episodes. On another day she uses the market to pose a problem for the children; she wonders aloud how she can use the coins she has to pay for a 5c plant (junior infants) or a 10c plant (senior infants). With each child handling, observing and exploring real coins (1c, 2c, 5c, and 10c), she encourages the children to explore the combinations they could use to pay for the plants.



Reflection: How can I use pretend play to a greater extent to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills?

Learning experience 58: The winning tower**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 3****Age group: Toddlers****Setting: Sessional service (playgroup)**

Patrick, Zyta and Johnny (each almost 3 years) are making a big tower. They talk to Aileen, the playgroup leader, about it and occasionally invite her to add a block or two to their construction while warning her to be careful! Johnny explains that they made it because he and Patrick (cousins) stayed in a big hotel on their holidays that was like a tower. *It's 'normous (enormous) tower, isn't it, and we made it all by ourselves*, Patrick notes looking at Aileen. Zyta draws Aileen's attention to the coloured blocks they used in the tower and comments: *It's got loads o' (of) colours like red and green and orange and ... and it could win a big medal*. Johnny adds, *We did good job*. Aileen suggests she could photograph the children with their tower. Using the digital camera, computer and printer, Aileen makes three copies of the photograph, and offers the children the opportunity to include them in their portfolios. Alongside the photograph, she writes each child's comment about the tower. The children tell Aileen that they'd like to add the photographs and comments to their learning portfolios. Meanwhile, Aileen makes some notes in her practitioner's file about each child's concentration to detail in building the tower and their ability to work together.

Through previous observations and conversations with Zyta, Aileen knows she is competitive and likes to be 'the best'. While Zyta's reference to getting a medal here reinforces this assessment, Aileen records how working collaboratively with Patrick and Johnny seemed to lessen her wish for Aileen to comment on how 'good' the tower was and what a great job she had done in building it. Aileen makes a note on her weekly plan to create more opportunities for co-operative learning for Zyta.



Reflection: Do I create a climate in which children feel confident to make decisions about what should go in their learning portfolios?

Learning experience 66: Including others**Theme: *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 3 and Learning goal 5****Age group: Young children****Setting: Infant class (primary school)**

Five of the nine girls from senior infants are playing in a group outside at lunchtime. Miss Davison is on yard duty. She overhears another girl, Louise, trying to join them. Louise's best friend Síle is absent today. The girls tell Louise that they don't want to play with her. Miss Davison immediately goes to Louise and acknowledges her hurt: *Louise, I can see that you are feeling sad and lonely. I need someone to help me mind everyone in the yard. Would you like to help me please?* Miss Davison and Louise keep each other company for the remaining few minutes of lunchtime. After lunch Miss Davison tells Louise's teacher about the incident in the yard. Later that day the teacher organises the children for circle time. She replaces her planned work with the discussion: *What do we do if someone wants to join in our play and we already have enough people?* She introduces the discussion using Ruby the class life-sized doll. Ruby tells the children about having to sit by herself one day on a school trip. She describes feeling very upset and wishing she was at home with her Mam and Gran. The teacher asks the children what Ruby's school-mates could have done to help her feel better. They suggest strategies such as taking turns to sit with her, singing songs together so that everyone was involved even if someone was sitting on his/her own, or taking a teddy to sit with. The teacher and children develop this conversation further over the following days.

The teacher notes in her planner to check how Louise copes socially on future days, and especially when Síle is absent. She also makes a note in her practitioner's file.



Reflection: How can I make greater on-the-spot use of assessment information I gather through watching and listening to children?

Learning experience 74: Working in a special education setting**Theme: Aims and Learning goals across the four themes****Age group: Young children****Setting: Infant class (special primary school)**

Stephen (6 years) attends a special school. He has muscular dystrophy and mild general learning disabilities. His parents tell his teacher Linda that he loves his cat, Tabby and dislikes noise. Based on assessments of Stephen's learning and development, Linda and the team of therapists working in the school devise a programme of learning experiences for him.

Linda focuses on Stephen's language, his challenging behaviour, his motor skills, and his early reading. She observes, assesses and records his speech and language: he shows delayed expressive language, for example calling a train a *choo choo*. He also finds sentence structure challenging and experiences articulation difficulties, for example calling a doggy a *goggy* and substituting *t* for *s* and *ch*. Linda shares this information with the speech therapist Nora who carries out further testing and, using the information from this, designs a daily language and speech programme for Stephen.

Based on Kate's (Special Needs Assistant) and her own observations of Stephen's challenging behaviours, Linda changes Stephen's afternoon routine. She refers him to Joan the physiotherapist who takes Stephen to the clinic's hydrotherapy pool for two afternoons per week, and to Gill the occupational therapist who takes Stephen to the Snoozaleen Relaxation Room on two other afternoons.

To support the development of Stephen's motor skills Joan provides Linda with suitable physical exercises, which include altering the time he spends sitting and standing. To make it easier for Stephen to move around the classroom Gill investigates the possibility of accessing an electric wheelchair for him. She also organises a range of aids to help him overcome some of the difficulties he is experiencing with fine motor skills. These aids include a pencil-grip and a modified computer keyboard.

Finally, Linda's assessment of Stephen's early reading skills shows his sight-word recognition is confined to his own name. Various tests have shown that he also experiences challenges with visual discrimination, sequential memory, and auditory sequencing. Considering this information, Gill suggests that Linda would arrange for Stephen to have sensory integration sessions.



Reflection: How can I continually build the practice of interdisciplinary work in order to provide children, where necessary, with specialised support to help them progress in their learning and development?