

Planning for Learning through Opposites

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Making plans

Child-friendly planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.



Focused area plans

The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- resources needed;
- the way in which you might introduce activities;
- individual needs;
- the organisation of adult help;
- size of the group;
- timing;
- safety;
- key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.

A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children respond to them in different ways and bring their own ideas, interests and enthusiasms. The important thing is to ensure that the

Making plans

children are provided with a varied and enjoyable curriculum that meets their individual developing needs.

Using the book

Read the section which outlines links to the Early Learning Goals (pages 4-6) and explains the rationale for focusing on 'Opposites'.

The chart on page 7 gives an example format for weekly planning. It provides opportunity to plan for the on-going continuous provision, as well as more focused activities.

Use pages 8 to 19 to select from a wide range of themed, focused activities that recognise the importance of involving children in practical activities and giving them opportunities to follow their own interests. For each 'Opposites' theme, two activities are described in detail as examples to help you in your planning and preparation. Key vocabulary, questions and learning opportunities are identified. Use the activities as a basis to:

- extend current and emerging interests and capabilities
- engage in sustained conversations
- stimulate new interests and skills.

Find out on page 20 how the 'Opposites' activities can be brought together with the 'Pyjama Party' and 'Opposites Parade'.

Use page 21 for ideas of resources to collect or prepare. Remember that the books listed are only suggestions. It is likely that you will already have within your setting a variety of other books that will be equally useful.

The activity overview chart on page 23 can be used either at the planning stage or after each theme has been completed. It will help you to see at a glance which aspects of children's development are being addressed and alert you to the areas which may need greater input in the future.

As children take part in the activities, their learning will progress. 'Collecting evidence' on page 22 explains how you might monitor each child's achievements.

There is additional material to support the working partnership of families and children in the form of a reproducible Family page found inside the back cover.

It is important to appreciate that the ideas presented in this book will only be a part of your planning. Many activities that will be taking place as routine in your group may not be mentioned. For example, it is assumed that sand, dough, water, puzzles, role play, floor toys, technology and large scale apparatus are part of the ongoing early years experience. Role-play areas, stories, rhymes, singing, and group discussion times are similarly assumed to be happening in each week although they may not be a focus for described activities.



Using the 'Early Learning Goals'

The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework's content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (page 4, DfE 2012). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to 'Opposites' could link to these expectations. For example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development, one aim relates to the development of children's 'self-confidence and self-awareness'. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the

reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, when the children write invitations for Grandparent's Day they will develop their writing skills for Literacy. Also, when they write with a pencil and illustrate their concertina books, they will use their fine motor skills which are part of Physical Development. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

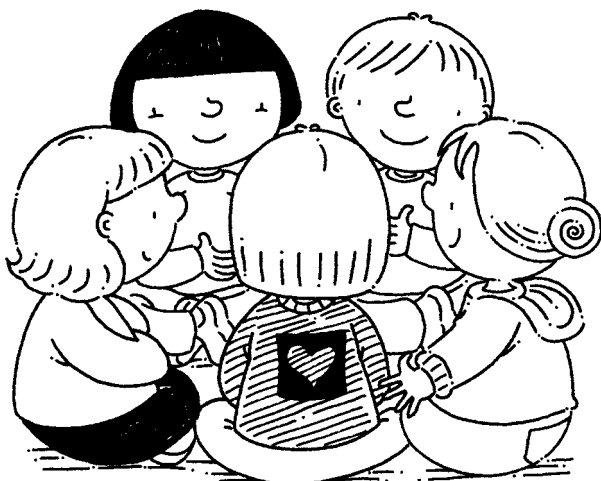
The Prime Areas of Learning Communication and Language

Listening and attention: children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

Speaking: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

'Opposites' provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. There are a wide range of books featuring 'Opposites' and these can be used to stimulate interest in the chosen themes, encouraging children to listen and to talk. When discussing opposite moods and talking about hot and cold activities, children will have the opportunity to ask questions. Setting up and using role-play areas such as the Bear cave will allow the children to follow instructions and develop their own narratives. Playing 'I went to the shop and bought a new...', and making up stories about Loud Luke and Quiet Queenie for others to listen to, will encourage children to express themselves and to show awareness of listeners' needs.



Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FOCUSED ACTIVITIES					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)					



Theme 1: Happy and sad

Communication and Language

- Make a class book of 'Opposites' beginning with 'happy and sad' and add to it throughout the topic. Ask children to draw or cut out pictures of happy and sad faces. Can they make up stories about why the faces look happy or sad? Film or record the children telling their stories. Scribe them into the book. (CL1, 2)
- Open an 'Opposites corner' for children to sit in. Make a collection of Opposites books (see Resources), toys, games and puzzles. (CL1)

Physical Development

- Play 'Throw that feeling'. Sit in a circle and throw a beanbag to a child. Ask them to show you a feeling with their face. Then repeat with a different feeling. (PD1)
- Make happy and sad mobiles from salt dough (see activity opposite). (PD1)
- Play 'Happy and sad'. Ask the children to dance around with smiley faces when they hear the music. When it stops they must stand still and look sad. (PD1)
- Make happy and sad pop-up puppets. Provide wooden spoons and help children to paint a happy face on one side and a sad one on the other. Decorate short cardboard tubes and make the puppets pop up. (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Introduce the theme by talking about the word 'opposite'. Play a circle game (see activity opposite). (PSE3)
- During circle time, encourage children to pull happy and sad faces. Pass round a mirror so they can look at their expressions. Ask children what makes them feel happy or sad. Pass a smile around the circle. (PSE1, 2)
- Play 'Mirrors'. Ask children to sit facing a partner and copy every move they make. Try 'Mirror opposites' – if your partner smiles, you must look sad. (PSE3)
- Read *Happy Hippo, Angry Duck* by Sandra Boynton. Talk about different moods and feelings. Can the children talk about some opposite moods such as happy and sad, angry and calm, and so on? (PSE2)
- Read *Dogger* by Shirley Hughes. How do the children feel when they lose a special toy? (PSE2)

Literacy

- Make a list of opposite words. Write and illustrate them onto pre-cut star shapes and display in the Opposites corner as a wall chart. (L1, 2)
- Ask the children if they can tell you any funny jokes or stories. Write them into a joke book to help make people smile.

Mathematics

- Use pre-cut sticky paper shapes to make happy and sad faces. Ask children to name the shapes they have chosen. (M2)
- Enjoy using this food rhyme:
*Five fish fingers, for your tea.
Will you share just one with me?
Eating one will make me glad.
There's four left, please don't be sad.
Four fish fingers...*
Change the food type. (M1)

Understanding the World

- Help children to take photographs of each other looking happy and sad. (UW3)
- In the 'Opposites corner', display pictures of countries in the world that are 'opposite' – such as hot and cold, North and South, big and small, and so on. (UW2)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Sing the 'Opposites' song from Bingo Lingo (see Resources). (EAD1)
- Sing 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands'. Sing it slowly and change to 'If you're sad and you know it, look like this' and pull sad faces. (EAD1)
- Ask children to paint happy and sad self-portraits. Use hand mirrors to look at faces. Label with captions to explain why the faces are happy or sad (EAD1)
- Use paper plates to make happy and sad masks. Use in a drama situation. Choose other opposite feelings such as brave/scared, asleep/awake or angry/calm. (EAD2)

Activity: Can you find the opposite?

Learning opportunity: Playing a collaborative game to introduce opposites.

Early Learning Goal: Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Making relationships.

Resources: *Opposites* by Eric Carle; a selection of pairs of opposites such as old/new shoes, big/small balls, empty/full bottles, tall/short candles, black/white boxes, happy/sad faces, heavy/light bags; a bean bag.

Organisation: Whole group.

Key vocabulary: Opposite words, pairs.

What to do: Sit in a circle with the opposite pairs mixed up in the middle. Show the children the big ball and ask if anyone can show you the small ball.

Look at the big and small balls together and explain that they are 'opposite' to each other. Can the children show you any other opposites?

Read *Opposites* by Eric Carle or any other books about opposites. Teach the children this simple song (tune: 'London Bridge'):

*Can you find the opposite, opposite, opposite?
Can you find the opposite of _____?*

Choose one item from the centre of the circle, such as the old shoe. Ask them if it is old or new? Pass the beanbag around the circle as you sing the song. Whoever is holding it when the song ends must find the 'new' shoe to make a pair. Give each child a turn.

The final song:

*We have found the opposites, opposites, opposites.
We have found the opposites, and now it's time to stop!*

Activity: Happy/sad mobiles

Learning opportunity: Working imaginatively with a malleable material.

Early Learning Goal: Physical Development.
Moving and handling.

Resources: A quantity of salt dough made using 2 cups of plain flour, 1 cup of water, 1 cup of salt, 1 tbsp oil; rolling pins; different-sized round cutters; brushes; paint; straws; string or ribbon; plastic hoop or metal coat hanger.

Organisation: Small group.

Key vocabulary: Circle, cutter, face, happy, smile, sad, tears.

What to do: Work with a small group of children to measure and mix the salt dough. Explain that it is not edible!

Give children time to experiment with the dough. Show them how to roll it out, not too thin, and cut out different-sized circles. Help them to make a small hole near the edge of each circle using a straw.

Talk about happy and sad faces. These can be painted

later or made by punching out small circles for eyes and adding mouths made from thin sausages of dough in a happy or sad shape. Use a damp brush to join pieces of dough together.

Bake the dough very slowly in a cool oven, preferably overnight. The children can paint the faces on both sides. Help them to thread various lengths of ribbon through the holes and hang faces from the hoop. Display where visitors can see them.

Display

Paint two giant faces, one with a happy smile and the other looking sad, and display them on the wall. Mount the children's happy/sad photographs and self-portraits underneath.

Make a puppet theatre from a big cardboard box. Use drapes to make curtains. Place on a table and encourage children to perform puppet shows using the pop-up puppets and other finger or glove puppets.

