

Planning for Learning through Celebrations and Festivals

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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 and although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately in reality children's activities and explorations cross over and combine with different subject areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording to ensure that key areas are not overlooked.

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.



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)					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role-play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Technology					
Water					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)					



Theme 1: What we celebrate

Communication and Language

- Introduce the words 'celebrate' and 'celebration'. Talk about things the children and their families enjoy celebrating. Include both large scale events and family ones. Has anyone been to a wedding? Did anyone go to a Bonfire Night display? What happened? (CL3)
- Look at photos of families celebrating events such as Diwali, the Chinese New Year, Eid, and Christmas. How can we tell people are celebrating? Encourage children to notice people's happy faces and to ask questions about the celebrations. (CL2)
- Share stories about celebrations. Talk about the key features that make an event a celebration. (CL1)

Physical Development

- Talk about favourite party games. Enjoy playing traditional party games that involve movement, both inside and in the outdoor space. (PD1)
- Dancing is a feature of many celebrations and festivals. Play music and encourage the children to enjoy moving, in time, to the music. Investigate Youtube for ceildh or barn dance music. Play this type of music and encourage children to dance with a partner. (PD1)
- Explain that eggs are often given at Easter to celebrate new life. In some areas of the world games are played with eggs to celebrate Easter. Hold an egg event where all the games are based on 'eggs' (see activity opposite). (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Encourage children to talk about feelings they have when they celebrate something. Also talk about feelings after a celebration has just finished! (PSE2)
- Talk about events that happen to celebrate birthdays such as parties, birthday cakes and giving cards and presents. Set up a role-play area for children to plan and hold celebrations for soft toys, dolls or peers. (PSE3)
- Play a game where children pass an empty box around the circle, to music. When the music stops the child holding the box says "In my celebrations box there is/are ..." and finishes the sentence with a word for an object or action to do with celebrations. This may also be played as an 'add on' game where each time the music stops the child is encouraged to repeat what has been said previously, before adding their own idea. (PSE3)

Literacy

- Either show the children certificates that adults in the setting received as a child to celebrate an event such as swimming 10 metres or making a Beaver/Rainbow promise or, if children have received certificates, invite them to 'show and tell'. Make certificates for events in the setting that children feel should be celebrated. Help the children to write their name, date and reason for the certificate. (L2)
- Begin to collect words for celebrations and festivals. Write the words on pieces of card and place them in shoe boxes covered in celebratory wrapping paper. In one box put the names of celebrations (e.g. Bonfire Night, Halloween, Easter, Eid ...). In a second box, put words to describe the events (e.g. happy, loud, scary, loving ...). In a final box put the names of objects and happenings for the celebrations (e.g. crackers, decorations, red packets, divas ...). In small groups enjoy sorting the words and using them to build sentences. Invite children to suggest new words to go in the boxes. (L1)

Mathematics

- Talk about the red packets that are given and received to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Enjoy counting activities using red envelopes (see activity opposite). (M1)
- Make a 'birthday train display' to show children's birthday months (see display ideas). Use the display for comparing amounts. How many children have birthdays in June? Is there the same number in another month? Which month has the fewest number of birthdays? (M1)
- Show the children a selection of birthday cards that feature ages. Help them to put the cards in number order. Ask them to lay on each card cake candles, counters or beads to match the age. (M1)

Understanding the World

- Begin a group calendar of celebrations. Include events that are special to a specific child and, also, ones that are more widely known. Encourage children to bring in photos of themselves celebrating and to explain what they do and why it is special. (UW1)
- Look at examples (either real ones or pictures on the internet) of the red packets that are given to children to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Talk about what is inside. Explain that depending on the country where the celebration is taking place the coins and notes

inside will differ. Ask carers to lend coins from different countries and encourage children to compare the similarities and differences. Use black wax crayons and paper to make rubbings of the coins. (UW2, 3)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Sing the traditional 'happy birthday to you' song but replace children's names with claps or instrument beats. Can the children identify who the claps represent? Also enjoy adding new lines. (e.g. Happy birthday to us, Happy birthday to us, Happy birthday dear XX, Let's ride on a bus!) (EAD1)
- On postcard sized pieces of card make self portraits (whole body) for the 'birthday train'. (EAD1)

Activity: Egg games for Easter

Learning opportunity: Developing skills in aiming, throwing and catching.

Early Learning Goal: Physical Development. Moving and handling.

Resources: Balls to act as eggs, dessert spoons, a rope, children's names written on lolly sticks, plant pots, sand timer for a minute, plastic cones.

Key vocabulary: Easter, egg.

Organisation: Large group outside. Equipment set out in four defined areas for the activities below.

What to do: Talk to children about Easter eggs and the way that eggs are given at Easter to celebrate new life. Ask who has eaten an Easter egg. Then tell the children that in some parts of the world games, which use eggs, are played at Easter. These include throwing and catching eggs in France and egg rolling in countries such as America, Germany, Scotland and Switzerland.

Tell the children that the balls are pretend eggs. Introduce each activity area and explain what to do. Say that when the bell rings they need to stop what they are doing and move on to the next area. The activities are:

Throw an 'egg' – Children stand behind a rope and take it in turn to throw a ball, underarm as far as possible. Where the ball lands is marked with a named lolly stick. Each child is allowed several attempts with the stick marking their furthest throw.

Roll an egg – Balls are rolled as far as possible.

Egg and spoon – Children balance a ball on a spoon and see whether they can walk along a wavy, chalked line without dropping the 'egg'.

Aim an egg – The children stand in a hoop and aim their eggs to land in a plant pot (egg cup).

Finish by talking to the children about the activities. Which ones did they particularly enjoy? Which ones would they like to do again another day?

Activity: Counting with red money packets

Learning opportunity: Counting and solving problems with money.

Early Learning Goal: Mathematics. Numbers.

Resources: 6 red Chinese New Year money packets or red envelopes one containing five, 1 pence coins, the others varying numbers of 1 pence coins; a 10 pence coin.

Key vocabulary: Chinese New Year, packet/envelope, coin, numbers to 20, more, fewest, greatest, smallest, red.

Organisation: Small group.

What to do: Show the children a red money packet. Explain that the colour red, for people from China, represents good luck, good wishes and happiness. Tell the children that the packets are given out at family gatherings to celebrate events such as the Chinese New Year and weddings.

Show the children the packet that contains five 1 pence coins. Together count the number of coins. How many are there? Ask a child to select one coin. What do they notice on the coin? Are there any numbers? Does anyone know its value?

Investigate the other packets. Ask which one contains the greatest number of coins? Which packet contains the fewest? Show the children the 10 pence and talk about its value. Do any of the packets equal 10 pence? Put the packets in pairs. How much money altogether is in each pair? Encourage the children to ask their own questions and solve problems.

Display

On separate pieces of A4 sized card print out, landscape, each month of the year. Cover a board with paper to represent blue sky and green grass and a black strip (ribbon, tape or border roll) as a railway track. Arrange the months as if carriages on a train. Add a red engine cut out from bright paper to the 'front' and round card circles for wheels.

On a second board begin a display of 'What we celebrate'. Talk to the children about what they would like to put on the board. Talk about the backing paper. What colours suggest 'celebration'? What types of events should the group add?