Learning Experience: Posting letters

Setting: Bluebells Playschool, Ayle, Co Tipperary

Setting type: Sessional

Age group: Young children

Theme: Communicating

Aim 3: Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language.

Learning goal 3: In partnership with the adult, children will build awareness of the variety of symbols (pictures, print, numbers) used to communicate, and understand that these can be read by others.

This learning experience is an example of how one service supports one of the learning goals in Aistear’s theme of Communicating.

One morning the children spotted an envelope addressed to the playschool and wanted to know what was in it, who had sent it and how did it get to playschool. We explained to the children how it arrived with us. Because they were so interested in the story of the letter we decided that we would write letters to send home to give the children a real-life experience of getting a letter.

We provided lots of materials for the children to write their letters - paper, envelopes, pencils, pens. They all wrote letters to themselves and put them in envelopes. The adults acted as scribes for the children where necessary. One of the boys wasn’t a bit impressed when he heard he was going to have to put a dress on to send his letter home but when we showed him how to put an address on his envelope he was more than happy to post his letter!
The previous day I had bought stamps at the post-office and when we handed these out we studied the shape of them and looked at the numbers and images on them. Once we all had stamps on our letters we headed off through the school yard (we are located on the school premises) where we met the junior infant class teacher. We stopped to say hello and tell her what we were doing. She thought it was a great idea and said she would do it with her class another day!

We are lucky to have a post-box on the wall just outside the school. We went two by two down to the post-box to post our letters. The children were delighted to tell us that the postman had delivered their letters to them at home a couple of days later!
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Plan a trip to the post-office and in advance, talk about what the children want to find out there.

- Add props to the pretend area to support post-office related play - used stamps, glue, envelopes, paper, post-cards, weighing scales, clock, boxes, wrapping paper, pens, leaflets, a satchel, signs with opening and closing times.

- Add books to the reading area that involve letter-writing like *Dear Greenpeace* or *The Jolly Postman*.

This experience also links to *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2, Learning goals 5 and 6 *Communicating*, Aim 4, Learning goals 1, 3 and 4
The play leader’s reflections

With the use of text and email now many children were not that familiar with the concept of a personal letter. For some of the children it was the first time they had ever received anything for themselves in the post.

It was interesting to see how many children knew their full name and address. Many of them wanted to include their second Christian names, especially the girls.

The confusion about a dress and an address was a revelation. We assumed that everyone was familiar with the word address but we were wrong, reminding us of the importance of listening actively to what the children say!