

The Zoo Aistear Planning

Junior/Senior Infants

Construction

The children will be given the task of creating a new habitat for the zoo, e.g. a lion's den or a bird sanctuary. The purpose of this station will be designing a safe home for their animal choice that members of the public can visit.

Key language focus will be on discussing the materials needed, what the habitat will look like, where the animals will sleep, where they can roam freely, how visitors can see them, etc.

Sand Station

The children will be given the task of finding miniature zoo animals, such as a figurine elephant, in the sand. One child in the pair could hide the animal and the other could find it. Give the children specific clues, e.g. 'The parrot can be found close to the spade.'

Key vocabulary: small, medium, large, extra large, round, smooth, etc.

Art 'n' Craft

The children are to be given the opportunity of making mini papier-mache zoo animals using junk art resources, including paint, paper, PVA glue, etc. If needed, the children could be given zoo animal caricatures and images that they could use as a stimulus. Children can paint and decorate their animals with glitter to complement its appearance.

The children could also be given a key task of creating a collection of animals that live in a cold environment, or animals that only eat vegetation, etc.

Small World Area

On a map, the children put their design of their zoo into life in a mini-world-like environment by creating the blueprint of the zoo, using mini animals and acting out the environment they have created.

Children could also track the journey of zoo creatures from their original home in far distant places such as Africa to their current home in the zoo, considering their journey and the key differences they might notice along the way.

Materials needed: Small figures, place mat, mini animals, figurine trucks, flowers, vegetation, etc.

Puzzles & Board Games

The children play with and explore a selection of puzzles, mini games, and board games that have a focus on the theme of wild animals and the zoo.

Role Play Area

The Zoo: Children go into role, acting out various scenarios and roles inside a teacher-constructed Dublin Zoo on a busy Saturday morning during school holidays. Possible scenarios explored could be a tiger escaping its habitat or a baby elephant being born, etc.

Materials needed: Zoo Aistear Pack, role cards, zoo images etc.



Opportunities for Assessment During Play

Construction

Observe the children constructing the new habitat for the zoo. Are they using the correct modelled language? Are they working well with others? Have they followed the instructions correctly? Is this habitat suitable for a wild animal?

Assess the completed zoo habitat layout the children have created? Does it resemble a lifelike zoo habitat? Can the animal be contained safely? Is there area where food can be deposited in a safe manner?

Art 'n' Craft

Engage in an artist chat with the children about their artwork at the station. What zoo animal have you created? Have you given it a name? Where would it be found in the zoo? What does it look like in real life? What does it eat?

Have the children followed the key criteria set in the task? Have they created animals that live in a hot or cold environment? Do the animals resemble their lifelike animals?

Sand Station

Set key criteria for the children to follow, e.g. 'Find a mini giraffe near the monkey.' Did they follow and meet the criteria?

Observe and ask questions based on it.

Small World Area

Ask the children to tell you what the mini figures in the area are. What are they doing? How are they travelling to the zoo? Where are they coming from?

Puzzles & Board Games

Can the children follow simple instructions? Can they work well with others? Do they work better independently? How long does it take them to complete the activity?

Role Play Area

Are the children using the correct modelled language? Are they getting into role? Are they working well in the various scenarios? Are they contributing to the drama?

Opportunities for Assessment After Play

To Be Completed Each Day or at the End of Each Week

- Ask the children to draw a picture of their favourite part of Aistear that day or for that week, for the 'Aistear Learning Log Entry'.
- If possible, an adult might narrate or act as a scribe describing what the child is describing in their picture.
- Prompt the children and compose a list on the board of all the key vocabulary that the children used during the day/week and add to it each day.

Follow Up Activity

The Zoo Animal Sorting Game, The Zoo Food Sorting Activity, The Zoo Colouring Sheet, The Zoo Animal Fact Card, The Zoo Comment Card.