NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

# Building on what we know: a reflective approach to planning for progression in language learning

This information leaflet describes how teachers in the NCCA's Primary School Network use an approach to teaching and learning in Irish that focuses on reflecting on what the children already know in order to plan for progression and development. In some classes the teacher works in partnership with the children as active agents in their own learning to choose the next language goals. The teachers report that the children enjoy the challenge of building on what they already know and that it has a positive effect on motivation and achievement in Irish. You can find some examples of their work on **www.ncca.ie/primary/languages**.

Collect samples of work

Reflection and analysis

Identify goals

Learning activities
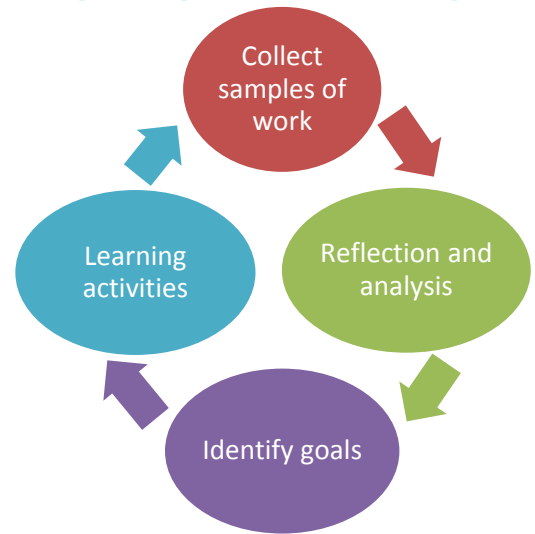
## 1. Collect samples of children's work
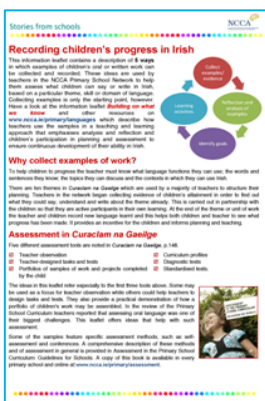
The teachers use a variety of ways to collect examples of the children's work in Irish, in order to see what they could already say, do or understand *as Gaeilge,* at the beginning and/or the end of each theme or unit of work. These include:

☑ brainstorming
☑ peer and self-assessment tasks
☑ oral presentations
☑ recordings of dramas or oral tasks.

Have a look at the leaflet *Recording children's progress in Irish* or watch some of the videos on **www.ncca.ie/primary/languages** for more information about collecting examples of children's oral and written work.

## 2. Reflection and analysis: how are we getting on?

The teachers use the samples of children's work to identify vocabulary, constructions, phrases and language functions that the children have already learned, topics about which they can talk, or contexts related to the theme in which they can use Irish. These samples are gathered either at the start of the current unit of work or the end of the previous one.

For example, one second class teacher in an Irish-medium school recorded the children describing their experience on Halloween. Here are some examples of their accounts:

Is mise Pauline agus ghléas mé suas mar skeleton agus dul mé go dtí teach go teach agus faigh mé a lán milseán.

Oíche Shamhna a bhí ann. Bhí mé gléasta suas mar Dracula. Bhí mé ag chuaigh ó theach go teach. Nuair a bhí mé ag cnag ar an doras rá mé 'Bob nó bia?'

Is mise Stiofán. Ghléas mé suas ar Oíche Shamhna mar werewolf. Chuaigh mé ó theach go teach. Nuair a d'oscail siad an doras dúirt mé 'Bob nó bia?' Bhí sé dubh dorcha amach. Ní maith liom tine ealaíne agus tine cnámh. Fuair mé a lán milseán agus d'ith mé a lán milseán agus fuair mé bolg breoite.

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## Extract from teacher's commentary

"*The children can give a continuous oral account of simple personal news and events. They can use vocabulary associated with Halloween.*

*Some of the children can describe things that happened in the past accurately, but some have difficulties with a number of verbs in the past tense – fuair mé, dúirt mé, chuaigh mé …*"

## Curriculum links

**Content objectives > Labhairt > Ag úsáid teanga**

- ☑ nuacht shimplí phearsanta a thabhairt
- ☑ sainfhoclóir na dtéamaí a leathnú agus a úsáid le cabhair áiseanna éagsúla
- ☑ caint faoi rudaí a tharla, a tharlaíonn, atá ar siúl agus a tharlóidh

**Language functions**

- ☑ Caidreamh sóisialta a dhéanamh: cur in aithne
- ☑ Eolas a thabhairt agus a lorg: tuairisciú

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The example below is from a second class child in a multi-grade setting, collected before beginning the theme *Caitheamh Aimsire (Hobbies)*.



Caitheamh Aimsire

Ag an tús

Peile    Camān    sliotar    haca aer

Is maith liom a bheith ag imirt peil
Is maith liom a bheith ag snámh
Is maith liom a bheith ag damhsa
Is breá liom a bheith ag marcaíocht
Is maith liom a bheith ag camogie
Is fuath liom a bheith ag rith
Is fuath liom a bheith ag canadh
Is fuath liom a bheith ag léamh
Is maith liom a bheith ag leadóg
Is maith liom a bheith ag rubar

## Commentary

"*This child knows the names of a large number of hobbies, and can express likes or dislikes (Is breá liom, is fuath liom, is maith liom … ) with relation to pastimes.*

*In partnership with the child I will identify other contexts relating to pastimes in which she could use Irish: for example to describe activities or games in which she takes part.*"

## Curriculum links

**Content objectives > Labhairt > Ag úsáid teanga**

- ☑ sainfhoclóir na dtéamaí don leibhéal seo a úsáid
- ☑ focail cháilitheacha a úsáid

**Language functions**

- ☑ Dearcadh a léiriú agus a lorg: taitneamh nó easpa taitnimh a léiriú

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## 3. Identify language goals

The teachers use their reflections on the children's work to choose language goals for the next lesson, to ensure that the children will have opportunities to extend and develop their language, be challenged to learn new constructions and vocabulary, and to use the language in new contexts.

Some teachers also use the examples to identify common errors or gaps in the children's language that they want to address, and plan specific activities and strategies to help the children overcome those mistakes. The sample unit *Ócáidí Speisialta* on **www.ncca.ie/primary/languages** demonstrates this.

In one of the schools the children play a key role in identifying the next steps in their language learning. When they have recorded what they can already say, write or understand about a particular theme and reflected on their learning, the teacher asks the children to think about what else they would like to be able to do in Irish, with relation to that particular theme. The teacher agrees the goals in partnership with the children and plans learning activities to achieve them. You can see a video of this approach and some examples of their work on **www.ncca.ie/primary/languages**.



## 4. Learning activities



The teachers plan learning activities to help the children achieve the language goals they have identified. They use a range of strategies, methods and resources, as outlined in *Curaclam na Gaeilge: Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí*. These are available to download from **www.ncca.ie/primary** or online at **www.curriculumonline.ie**.

The change in the teachers' practice is not the particular teaching methods or resources they use, but **how** they use them, and how they **reflect on and plan for** the children's learning in Irish to build on what they already can do or understand.

## … the cycle continues

At the end of each unit the teachers and children collect examples to record the new language they have learned. This helps the teachers to assess progress and to evaluate the success of the approaches and activities. It also serves as a basis for future planning. The children enjoy *showing off what they know* and building up a record of their learning in Irish over time.

## Further reading and information

This information sheet summarises feedback from schools in the NCCA's Primary School Network about how they developed their practice in language teaching and learning. You will find more resources about supporting progression in language learning at **www.ncca.ie/primary/languages**.