

Educational Program

National Law: Section 168

National Regulations: Regulation 73-76

National Quality Framework: Standards 1.1, 1.2

Policy Statement

Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework conveys the highest expectations for all children's learning from birth to five years and through the transitions to school.

Experiencing **BELONGING** is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. Belonging acknowledges children's independence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.

BEING recognises the significance of the here and now in children's lives. It is about the present and them knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging in life's joys and complexities and meeting challenges in everyday life.

Children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. They are shaped by many different events and circumstances. **BECOMING** reflects this process of rapid and significant change in the early years as young children learn and grow. It emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

The expectations of the Early Years Learning Framework are conveyed through 5 learning outcomes

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators.

Play is a context for learning that

- Allows for expression of personality and uniqueness.
- Enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity.
- Enables children to make new connections between prior experience and new learning.
- Assists children to develop relationships and concepts.
- Stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what children can do and learn.

*Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia 2009
Retrieved: August 2010*

Strategies and Practices

Holistic Approach to learning

Taking a holistic view to our teaching includes understanding the connections of the mind, body and spirit. We value the connections between children, their families and the community in which they come from, with a deep respect for the natural environment and the balance between people, plants and animals on the land.

Responding to Children

Educators respond to children strengths, interests and abilities. This knowledge is highly valued and is the foundation for engaging children in further play, ideas and curriculum decision-making. Using this knowledge, educators will extend children's learning by open ended questions, feedback, challenging ideas and encouraging children to seek their own answers and independent discovery.

Learning Through Play

Our Early Childhood settings allow children to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Inviting classrooms encourage children to problem-solve, seek clarification, create and lay the building blocks for further learning. Educators will support the inclusion of all children, assist children to challenge play that is unjust while offering alternative solutions that foster a caring, fair and inclusive classroom environment.

Intentional Teaching

Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and action. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote and challenges educators to be reflective of doing things because they have always been done that way.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment of children's learning refers to the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. In daily planning educators will consider routines, experiences and the physical setup of the environment. Educators will use a variety of methods to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's progress.

Ongoing assessment processes that include a diverse array of methods capture and validate the different pathways that children take toward achieving shared outcomes. When reviewing children's learning educators value the "journey" of the learning just as importantly as the outcomes.

The service recognises and acknowledges that educators and families have varying knowledge and skills regarding children's play experiences, and that all stakeholders' opinions, ideas and comments are respected and valued. Children themselves are included in the assessment process and this becomes a powerful tool in understanding how they learn best.

Educators consider several basic concepts when documenting observations. These can include

- Ensuring that documentation is clear, objective and meaningful
- Relating documentation to children's individual and group experiences
- Educators shall ensure that documentation is maintained all year.

Educators may choose to use any combination of the following methods of documentation

- "What we did today" sheets
- Take home sheets or communication books
- Anecdotal records
- Daily Diary
- Running records
- Focus group approach
- Audio or visual media

Group Needs

Children, like adults, are social beings and their peer groups affect how they interact, play, learn and develop. We know from research it is beneficial for children to be involved in small groups rather than large groups. The service will provide various ways of grouping throughout the program

- Family groups - children from the same family will be allowed to play together, eat together or enjoy special occasions together.
- Peer groups - where friends form their own groups or where groups are encouraged on the basis of friendships.

- Free choice groups - where an activity or an experience is set up and children choose which activity and caregiver's group they would like to be in.
- Whole groups - where the whole group is together such as story time, music time, specials events, meals and transitions. The service considers long periods of time as a whole group as developmentally inappropriate unless there are several educators involved.

Individual Developmental Needs

The program will

- Be essentially child initiated where appropriate.
- Cover all areas of the whole child's development.
- Encourage independence and self-help skills.
- Provide self-selected, self-paced activities and routines which meet individual needs and interests and enable all children to experience success.
- Provide individual, group, inside and outside activities.
- Provide quiet and active activities.
- Provide an opportunity for individual/small and large group activities.
- Provide opportunities for small and large muscle activities.
- Offer both planned and spontaneous activities.
- Offer smooth transitions through the day.
- Include a rest time which is age appropriate.
- Provide flexibility in toileting and care routines.
- Encompass hygiene and safety issues.
- Encourage understanding of nutrition.
- Offer opportunities for the children to be exposed to a wide variety of visitors and excursions.

Gathering Information

Educators are free to choose a planning approach that works for them. The service expects educators to have displayed for parents

- A living philosophy.
- Long term goals
- Clear methods of maintaining developmental records.
- A commitment to individualised programs.

Educators are expected to have

- Knowledge of child development.
- An understanding of learning styles, attitudes, temperament and activity preferences.
- The ability to collect information from children and their families.
- The ability to interpret this information.
- The ability to respond to interpretations.
- The ability to evaluate the children's experiences and the environment.

Observing Children

Educators may choose to use any of the following methods of observation and planning

- Anecdotal observations
- Running records
- Focus group approach
- Audio or visual media
- Child background information
- Individual and group experiences
- Daily planning diaries
- Indoor/outdoor plans
- Developmental summaries
- Checklists
- Sociograms
- Learning stories

Communication with Different Stakeholders

Children

Children are encouraged to share their ideas of activities and experiences they would like to participate in and documentation of these decisions are to be recorded. Photographs and visual mediums (children's art work etc) are to be displayed ensuring children feel appreciated.

Families

Families can be involved in the program in many ways. Conversations at the beginning and end of each day, regular conversations to discuss a child's progress, excursions to a parents work or home and social gatherings at the service are important ways of developing partnerships and having families involved in their child's care at our service. Educators may wish to

- Invite families to share special talents.
- Display photographs.
- Have an open day or night
- Morning teas
- Special events
- Newsletters
- Communication boards

Educators

All educators who work face to face with the children and implement the program should have involvement in the planning and evaluation. It is important that all educators work together and be willing and committed to making programs work.

Management

Educators programming and planning will be reviewed by the Educational Leader / Certified Supervisor in charge of the day to day operations or the services General Manager on an annual basis. During this time professional development may be provided and educators are encouraged to view this as an "opportunity for learning". Management acknowledges that all educators will have different observation skills and will view children and their behaviour in different ways.

Community

It is important to remember that our service is part of a wider community and they too play an important role in the groups programming and planning. For example, educators may invite a local council ranger to discuss with children about looking after pets and safety strategies when encountering an animal that is not a pet such as an injured bird, stray dog or a snake.

Sources and Further Reading



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