

# EDUCATORS

## BELONGING, BEING & BECOMING



Educators' Guide to the  
EARLY YEARS LEARNING  
FRAMEWORK FOR AUSTRALIA

Produced by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.

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### Abbreviations used in this document:

- **The Framework:** Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- **The Guide:** Educators Belonging, Being & Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- **The Reflect Respect Relate resource** or **RRR: REFLECT RESPECT RELATE**  
Assessing for learning and development in the early years using observation scales (2008, DECS)

The terms used in the Guide are consistent with the Framework. For explanations see the definition boxes and glossary in the Framework.

# I. INTRODUCTION: USING THE GUIDE WITH THE FRAMEWORK

*Belonging, Being & Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and Educators Belonging, Being & Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia are intended to support curriculum decision making to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school (Framework, p.5).*

## A NEW VISION FOR AUSTRALIA

**The Early Years Learning Framework** is an important and timely resource for early childhood. It embraces a vision for a new Australia:

- a future that embraces all Australians
- a future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility
- a future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of Australia.

To this end, the Framework is built around a number of key concepts and principles which require educators to use particular understandings and practices effectively to achieve the desired outcomes. This Guide will help educators do this in their local settings.

A major feature that distinguishes Australia from all other countries in the world is the ancestral relatedness of Indigenous people. This relatedness forms the world's oldest living culture. Acknowledgment of Indigenous ancestral relatedness, its values, and how these are realised is distinctly Australian.

The Council of Australian Governments is committed to closing the gap in educational achievements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (Framework, p.6).

**The Framework** provides an opportunity for educators across Australia to work towards:

- a clear focus on children's learning and wellbeing
- a shared language for curriculum in the early childhood field
- a base for planning, promoting and assessing learning
- improved quality in early childhood settings
- cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- including families and communities in children's learning.

When starting to use the Framework remember that it is just that – a framework. It is not a syllabus, not a program, not a curriculum, not a model, not an assessment tool, not a detailed description of everything children will learn. It is a framework of principles, practices and outcomes with which to build your curriculum.

It is based on the best available evidence and what is socially and culturally important. As such, some ideas will be consistent with some of your practices and knowledge, and some will be challenging, new and very particular to Australia. This provides excellent opportunities for all educators to build on their current knowledge and experience, so that their curriculum decision making (both intuitive and reflective judgements) are consistent with current thinking and expectations.

Both the Framework and the Guide are for early childhood educators in all Australian early childhood settings working in partnership with families and children and may complement, supplement or replace settings' current frameworks. The Guide provides support for individuals and collegial teams to use the Framework.

## A NEW VISION FOR EDUCATORS

*There are several big bits to education. One is the curriculum (what we want people to learn); then there's teaching (how we help them to learn); and assessment (how we make judgements about how they are getting on). We focus on curriculum (usually maths, language, science), then assessment (usually standardised tests). The bit we leave out... is the quality of teaching... Most reform systems are looking backwards; they're looking back to the old system that was the result of the industrial revolution. We no longer want a better steam engine. We need to rethink. To get back to what drives people to learn and achieve... education is about kids and energising them (Sir Ken Robinson, 2009).*

*Educators Belonging, Being & Becoming*, the Educators' Guide to support the use of the Framework, takes an approach that values educators engaging in professional growth leading to thoughtful judgement and decision making for all children's learning. Evidence shows that reflective practice can help educators to think more deeply about their work and motivate them to explore new ideas and approaches (see, for example, Anning & Edwards, 2006). The Framework and the Guide aim to embed reflective practice and inquiry into educators' everyday practices. For educators:

- *Belonging* relates to connections and relationships with other educators and professionals from other disciplines, participation in professional organisations and networks, and community involvement.
- *Being* relates to the individuality of each early childhood educator and to the distinctiveness of each team of educators. Individuals and groups bring a unique collection of beliefs, values, interests, knowledge, experience and perspectives to planning, practice and relationships.
- *Becoming* relates to the importance of learning and reflecting in order to increase professional knowledge and improve skills and practices.

Respect for diversity underpins the Framework and the Guide. Both documents recognise the diversity of educators':

- personal history, experiences and values
- professional pathways and qualifications
- beliefs about childhood, children, learning and curriculum
- journey and drive for cultural competence
- use of theoretical perspectives.

## USING THE GUIDE

**The Guide** is designed to be used in interactive ways to promote in-depth conversations and thinking over a sustained period about the concepts which build the Framework. It is not intended to be read in one sitting. Rather, individuals and teams of educators may find it helpful to 'dip' into the Guide at different points, to focus on one section at a time, and to begin with the section of most interest to them. Most readers will find it helpful to read the Framework before turning to the Guide.

The following concepts of the Framework are explored in the Guide:

- belonging, being and becoming and their links to learning
- principles, practices and pedagogy, including play and partnerships with families, to support learning
- reflective practice
- curriculum decision making to foster children's learning in areas identified by five broad Learning Outcomes
- facilitating children's transitions in the early years
- developing cultural competence
- Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence
- using theoretical perspectives.

Both the Framework and the Guide are designed to engage educators in critical thinking, reflection and inquiry. As such they are not prescriptive or 'recipe' books – but rather are intended to provoke, inspire and challenge. They recognise that there is not one 'right way' to provide for children's learning. They provide a range of ways to think about children's learning. If we think there is just one right way and if we have no doubt about the quality of our provision, we leave little room for reflection, for questioning or for change.

The sections that follow this Introduction all have a similar format. Each major section starts with a quote from the Framework and then is divided into the following segments which help you to explore particular concepts in the Guide:

**Think about**—explanatory information about the section

**Talk and reflect about**—includes reflective questions and suggestions for going deeper

**Try out**—possible entry points

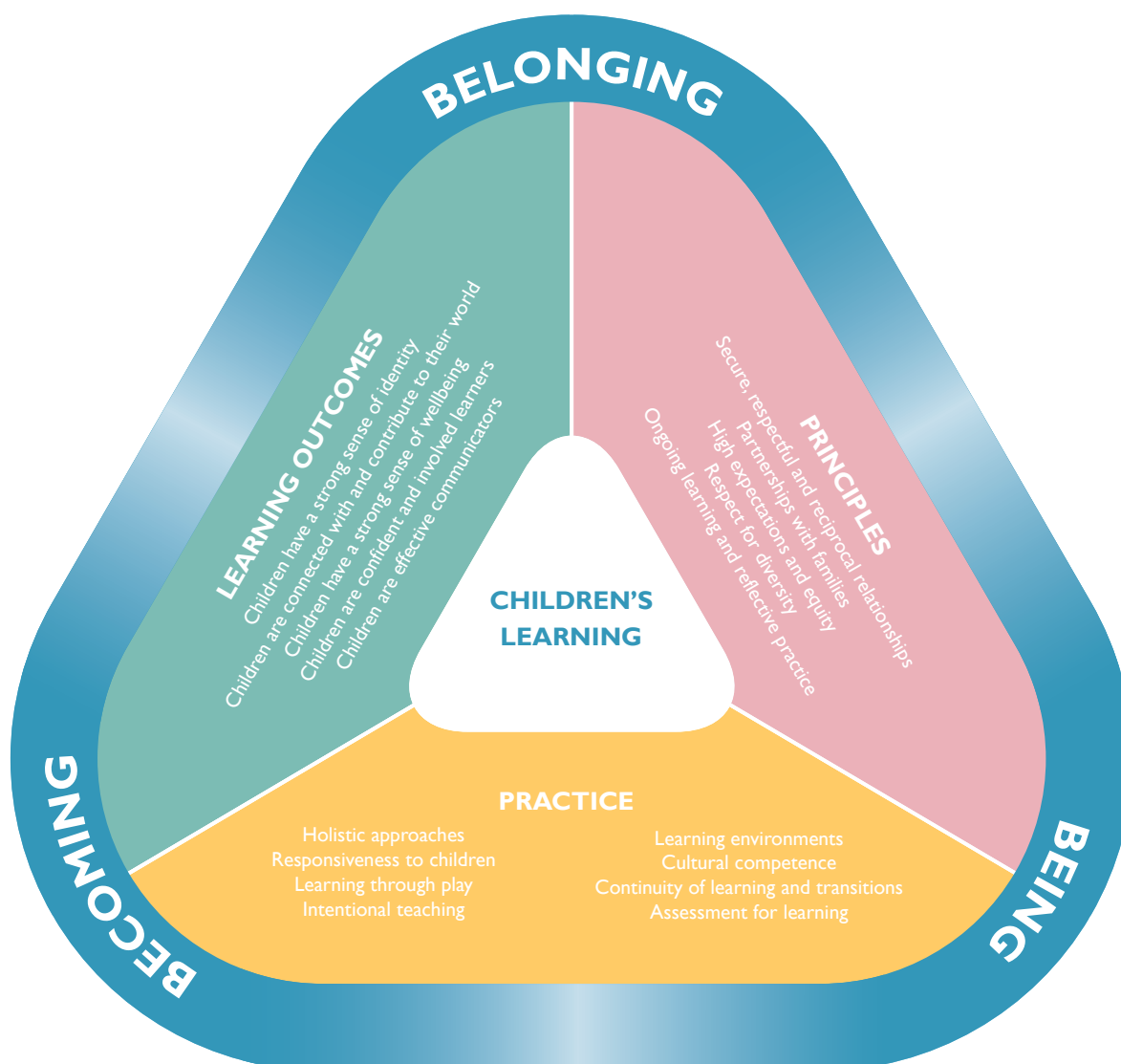
**Hear about**—stories and models of practice

**Find more about**—links to other resources.

Photos are included to illustrate the links between the Principles, Practice and Learning Outcomes.

Each section has a reference to the *Reflect Respect Relate* resource which provides a guide for educators to critically reflect on pedagogy and relationships and the connection with children's wellbeing and involvement in learning.

## ELEMENTS OF THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK



In addition, there is a further resource—**The Early Years Learning Framework in Action**. This resource contains educators' stories and models of their plans for and outcomes of children's learning, with questions to provoke thinking and to generate discussion in relation to the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the Framework. The stories demonstrate the holistic nature of children's learning and the way educators have integrated the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the Framework into their curriculum.

The Guide can be used in many ways including:

- using one section at a time in staff meetings, network meetings and collaborative professional conversations
- using the Guide as a working document and adding personal journal entries, stories, articles, photos, feedback specific to the various sections.

Each section of the Guide is interdependent with the others. That is, no one section stands alone. When we are thinking about our curriculum decision making we are also thinking about working in partnerships with families, about play, about monitoring children's learning, and so on. When we are thinking about cultural competence we are also thinking about our theories and beliefs, our families and communities, outcomes for children and so on.

## Who is responsible for implementing the Framework?

The Framework outlines best practice and reflects contemporary early childhood research and theory. It provides guidance and parameters for quality practice and it is intended that educators' practice is informed by it. The Framework encourages everyone who works with young children to see themselves as **pedagogical leaders**. If you work with young children you are responsible for using the Framework.

The term **pedagogy** refers to the holistic nature of early childhood educators' professional practice. Pedagogical leaders take an active role in promoting early childhood educators' practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning.

When educators establish respectful and caring relationships with children and families, they are able to work together to make curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local context. These experiences gradually expand children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Educators' professional judgements are central to their active role in facilitating children's learning:

*As [educators], all we have at a given moment in a given situation is our very best judgement. Throughout our professional lives we study and reflect in order to refine that judgement; we exchange with colleagues, consider others' solutions to the problems we face, we come together at meetings, we examine the available evidence—all in order to improve our judgement. In the last analysis, our very best judgement is all there is (Katz, 2008).*

Both the Framework and the Guide aim to improve professional judgement and practice, especially curriculum decision making, by encouraging a cycle of questioning, planning, acting and reflecting that will build professional knowledge and confidence. This knowledge and confidence will support educators to make informed judgements *so that all children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life* (Framework, p.7).



## 2. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR IMPROVEMENT

### WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when early childhood educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated (Framework, p.13).*

### THINK ABOUT

Ongoing learning and reflective practice is one of the five Principles of the Framework. Reflective practice helps us to become increasingly thoughtful about our work and motivates us to look deeper and explore new ideas and approaches. The Framework aims to make reflective practice and inquiry a part of our everyday practice.

The Guide and the Framework are both designed to engage us, and teams, in critical thinking, reflection, and inquiry and culturally competent practices, with the aim to develop new insights into what we do and why we do it.

The Guide will support us to be reflective practitioners by providing:

- critical questions to reflect upon
- ways to promote a culture of inquiry
- a process for inquiry.

Reflective practice is more likely to lead to change when it is undertaken collectively. Learning together with colleagues draws upon the diverse knowledge, experiences, views and attitudes of individuals within the group. It is a way to experiment with new ideas and ways of teaching and caring, and to keep motivated about making a positive difference to children's learning.

Creating and sustaining a culture of inquiry requires:

- trust and collegiality so that educators feel able to talk about their concerns and the challenges they face
- respect for different viewpoints
- opportunities for all educators to contribute to discussions and debates
- commitment to inquiry at the organisational level
- time for reflection and time to develop skills in a range of approaches to reflective practice (for example, journal writing, critical conversation groups)
- recognition that there is no one right approach or answer
- courage to question taken-for-granted practices and assumptions.

An inquiry process includes the following steps:

- reflect upon practices, identify concerns, choose an issue
- gather information and evidence on what is currently happening and look for patterns
- reflect upon what the information is telling you
- frame a question to be explored
- decide upon action—change of practice
- evaluate the change
- start the process again.

Reflective educators often find it useful to have a 'critical friend' to support and challenge their thinking and practice. A critical friend can:

- inspire, reminding you of the importance of your work and ongoing learning
- provoke, challenging you to explore your beliefs and practices (the why and how you do things in particular ways) with questions, new insights and alternative perspectives
- support, helping you to identify information, resources and processes to expand your inquiry
- provide collegiality, lending you an ear, a shoulder and friendship.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

How do you currently examine your practices?

In what ways do you currently plan for improvement in your practices?

How might the Framework help you to reflect on your practices?

What might a learning community look like in your setting?

What systems and processes do you have to meet with colleagues and talk about children's learning together?

How might you create opportunities for conversations, debates, and collaborative inquiries, ensuring that all voices are heard and responded to with respect?

## Going deeper

Look at page 13 of the Framework and reflect individually/with your team on the overarching questions outlined. These questions may spark reflective conversations or they may help you develop your own questions for inquiry.

How will you use the Framework to make decisions about the pedagogies you choose so that culture is recognised and supported and all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, realise their potential?

## TRY OUT

Scan the Framework and select a section that you/your team would like to begin with.

Get together to talk about what people's responses are to their initial reading.

Decide on an element of your program about which you would like to take a 'snapshot'. Look at what's visible in your program and what's not visible.

This could be done through:

- reviewing photographs to decide what Learning Outcomes are reflected
- looking at learning journeys/portfolios
- looking at children's displays of work around your environment.

Talk about the data you have collected and think about what it is telling you.

How do you demonstrate that you acknowledge and build on the context and discourse of each child and family in your setting, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

What concerns/challenges does it raise for you?

This would be a good time to begin a journal to record the conversations and document your ongoing learning as you 'unpack' the Framework.

You might like to read examples of practitioner inquiry to help you/your whole staff team understand this approach.

## HEAR ABOUT

### **Reflect upon practices, identify a concern, and choose an issue**

Over the lunch break, a team of educators in a preschool shared their frustrations with 'group-time'. One educator says, "I spend most of my time trying to manage the children's behaviour because they obviously don't want to be there". As they spoke all agreed that none of them were happy with the way group-time worked.

### **Gather information and evidence on what is currently happening and look for patterns**

The staff team decided to collect information about what was actually happening at group-time. Which children were engaged and which weren't? What were they planning for group-times? What did the children think about group-time?

They decided to collect the information in a number of ways including taking observations and photographs of the children at 5 minute intervals during group-times to see where the children were positioned and how they were participating, and asking children questions about what they understood group-time to be.

They brought back the data and looked for patterns, discovering that it wasn't just the staff members who were unhappy with group-time. A small group of children appeared to be highly engaged in the group-times, but a relatively large number expressed the opinion that group-time was 'boring'. As one child responded, "You just listen to the teacher and do what they say".

### **Frame a question to be explored**

How can we rethink group-time to make it more meaningful to the children?

### **Decide upon action and change practice**

The staff decided:

- to offer 'workshops' to children instead of group-time. The workshops would be hands-on and draw upon children's ideas and suggestions as well as staff members' expertise (eg workshops around music, stories, puppetry, gardening)
- that children could choose whether they attended the workshop provided. For those who chose not to attend, they could continue with their existing play.

### **Evaluate the change**

Staff got back together with their second lot of observations and photographs, and were surprised to discover that many of the children who had previously struggled with group-time were often the first to sign up for the workshops and actively participate. Each staff member was feeling very enthusiastic about the workshops, and the enthusiasm appeared to be shared by the children.

### **Start the process again!**

With the overwhelming success of providing children with choice about attending workshops and giving children a voice in what they were learning, staff began to reflect upon how they might encourage children's choice and voice more widely in the curriculum decision making process.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- Reflect Respect Relate—In *Reflect Respect Relate* reflective practice forms the basis of an ongoing cycle of review, inquiry and improvement—reflect, question, plan, act, reflect
- Framework in Action, Story 1

# 3. CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING: THE KEY TO IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Curriculum encompasses all the interactions, experiences, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (Framework, p.9).*

### THINK ABOUT

Developing meaningful curriculum involves interactive decision making by children, parents and families, educators and the broader community with the aim of fostering children's learning. Curriculum decision making is guided by a combination of principles, practices and outcomes to promote children's learning.

Curriculum that is culturally appropriate and developed in consultation with families and community will ensure that children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, are actively participating and contributing their knowledge and ideas as learning evolves.

All our curriculum decisions affect each child in some way. Early childhood educators have been found to make 936 curriculum decisions in a six hour day (Podmore & Carr, 1999). In the busyness of a day, not all these curriculum decisions may be made in the best interests of children, but rather as a means of practicality. These curriculum decisions that we make will all be influenced by our beliefs and knowledge. So we need to ask ourselves, what are our beliefs and where do they come from? What do we know? Are there other beliefs and knowledge that would lead us to different decisions?

Skilful educators are aware of their beliefs and knowledge and the theoretical perspectives from which they come. This is important because it helps us to understand why we decide on:

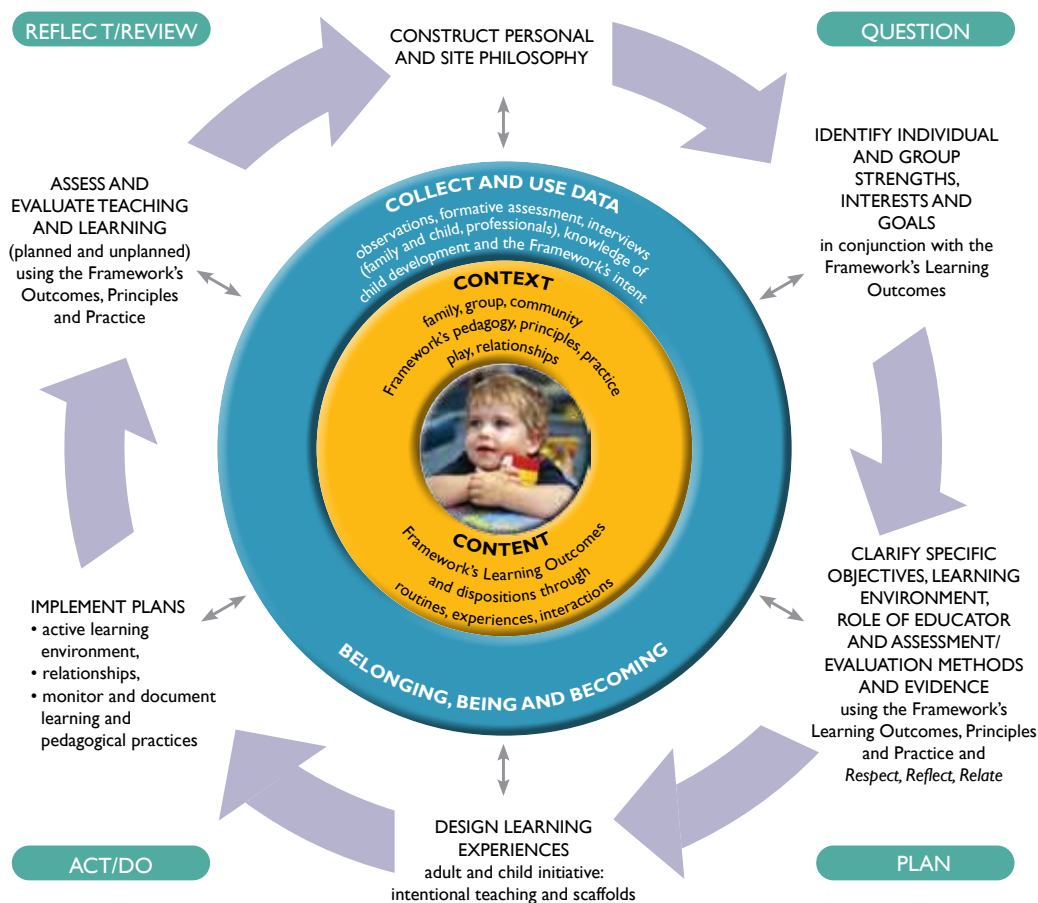
- content for our curriculum – what to teach, planned experiences and learning
- approaches for managing behaviour
- how we set up the environment
- what resources we choose
- particular programs or methods
- which teaching strategies to use
- how we will relate to people
- how we assess.

Once we understand our beliefs and knowledge, we can make considered, wise choices in our decision making in planning for, supporting and reflecting on children's learning. The Framework supports a model of curriculum decision making as an ongoing cycle of information gathering, questioning, planning, acting and reflection.

Both the Framework and the Guide use this reflective practice cycle to promote belonging, being and becoming and learning, both for children and educators and learning in the five Learning Outcomes for children.

## EARLY YEARS PLANNING CYCLE

### *Belonging, Being and Becoming*



### TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

What did learning look like in your setting this week?

In what ways does your cultural competence influence your curriculum practices?

How do you currently make decisions and plan for your curriculum? Who is involved?

In what ways are you listening to culturally diverse families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and how are they sharing their culture and learning? How do you recognise and build on your learning as an educator of each child in your setting?

When considering children's current interests, how do you decide which interests to follow and which to ignore? Are some more appealing for their 'potential learning value' or because they are a 'better fit' with our own knowledge and resources? How do you make these decisions?

### Going deeper

Reflect on your current curriculum. Are the focuses big enough to be inclusive of children's emergent ideas? Does the curriculum look the same for all children? How do you consider such things as dispositions?

Find an article from the newspaper or a video clip from TV that could provoke conversation and debate about what might be appropriate/inappropriate knowledge or skills for young children to learn. For example, stories around violence, death, human rights, sex, war, discrimination, children's popular culture. Share the article or clip with your colleagues and discuss whether there are particular subjects you would never consider raising through your curriculum. Why/why not? What if a child raised the subject or it came up in the children's play? What does this reveal about the ways in which we make our curriculum decisions?

Examine the principles and practices upon which you make your decisions. Are they consistent with the Framework and how does it influence your relationships and teaching? In what ways does your 'intent' shape your spontaneous interactions?

## TRY OUT

As a team or on your own, draw a model of what curriculum decision making looks like in your service. Consider how you represent: individuals and groups of children, families and community, educators' beliefs and practices. Does your diagram show formal and long term decisions, daily and spontaneous decisions?

Using the model you have designed, and using the new Framework, consider what looks the same? Where are there inconsistencies? Where would you place belonging, being and becoming in your diagram? Where would you place the Learning Outcomes? Trial your new model. This could be done with another setting to gain further insight and create a learning community.

Look at your curriculum/program—What learning areas, whose voices, what types of play, what teaching strategies are used? What is being over-used or overlooked?

## HEAR ABOUT

Using the Early Years Planning Cycle

### Reflect

- Reflect on your professional knowledge, which includes your knowledge of each child and family and children's strengths and interests.
- Reflect on what the children and families are bringing/contributing, saying, doing.
- Reflect on different cultures, ways of knowing and being.
- Reflect on what the group and overall community priorities are for your setting.
- Collate and show evidence of this thinking.

### Question

- How can we use children's prior learning, interests and strengths in conjunction with the Learning Outcomes to guide planning for children's learning?
- How are we working in partnership with families to plan for children's learning?
- How can we engage children actively in learning?
- What are appropriate teaching strategies/practices?
- How are we holding high expectations that all children will be successful learners?
- How are we striving for effective and equitable ways, ensuring that each child has opportunities to achieve the Learning Outcomes?

### Plan

- Plan for children's holistic learning using the Learning Outcomes.
- Plan the pedagogical learning environment and teaching strategies, using the Practices and Principles of the Framework.
- Design and set up the physical learning environment.
- Plan for ways to monitor and assess children's learning consistent with the Principles and Practices of the Framework.

### Act

- Engage with children and families using relevant scaffolds.
- Co-construct meaning with children – ensure there are sustained interactions and thinking experiences with all children in secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships.
- Take a supportive role in children's play, guided by the Framework's Practice *Learning through Play*.
- Model and promote enabling learning dispositions.
- Listen and respond to the children's voices.
- Monitor and reflect on children's learning and pedagogical practices and refine as you go.

### Reflect

- What is working and what could we improve?
- In what ways are we ensuring that we are considering each child's belonging, being and becoming?
- In what ways do we know which children or groups of children are being privileged or disadvantaged by our curriculum? In what ways are we addressing this?
- How do we accommodate children's many learning styles?
- In what ways are we assessing children's learning and how are we scaffolding and extending learning?
- In what ways are we gaining feedback from peers, children, families and the community?
- How are we involving children and families in the assessing process?
- How are we documenting the learning journey for children and educators and how are we sharing this with children, families and community?

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- Early Years Learning Framework, pp.9–19
- *5 Perspectives on Quality*: an article by Lilian Katz
- Reflect Respect Relate—*Reflect Respect Relate* provides a guide for considering the theories and approaches that influence practices and planning
- Framework in Action, Stories 13 and 31

### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 3: High expectations and equity*

*Practice: Learning environments*

*Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators*



# 4. LINKING BELIEFS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES WITH PRACTICE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FRAMEWORK'S PRINCIPLES, PRACTICE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Drawing on a range of perspectives and theories can challenge traditional ways of seeing children, teaching and learning (Framework, p.11).*

### THINK ABOUT

All curricula, whether a national framework or a locally developed program, reflect ideas of how children should be and what they should become. The beliefs of educators are a major factor in how a curriculum is planned, what goals are established and how relationships and the learning environment and experiences are established. Educators' actions and words are observable signs of their:

- theories about how children learn
- understandings about the purpose of early childhood programs
- beliefs about young children and families.

They are powerful influences on the outcomes for children.

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia is holistic and integrated and as such this section provides an opportunity to explore the relationship between all three elements of the Framework's Principles, Practice and Learning Outcomes.

The Principles and Practices of the Framework are founded on beliefs that:

- children are capable and competent
- children actively construct their own learning
- learning is dynamic, complex and holistic
- children have agency. They have capacities and rights to initiate and lead learning and be active participants and decision makers in matters affecting them.

Without a guiding curriculum framework, educators' individual images, beliefs and values about what children should be and what they should become influence both the planned and unplanned curriculum experiences and learning of children and can lead to wide differences in outcomes for children.

Commitment to a shared vision about children's learning (see pages 5-8 of the Framework) involves:

- questioning why we do things the way we do (our practices)
- reflecting on our practices to make sure that they are consistent with the vision.

The relationship of principles and practices is not static. It is a dynamic process where what we believe and think affects what we do and what we do affects what we believe and think.

It is equally important to listen to the understandings each family has for the belonging, being and becoming of their own children. A partnership with a family is about listening in order to:

- understand family perspectives
- support family aspirations
- plan for equitable outcomes.

When we understand the various theoretical perspectives and the images and beliefs we hold to explain learning and development, we are able to make well informed choices that build supportive environments for children. As educators, we find a lot more job satisfaction and professional growth if we engage in seriously thinking about what we believe and what we do. By reflecting on theories and choices



we open up opportunities to gain new insights and make sustainable changes to our understanding and practice.

Understandings about early learning and development are now not just linear as in the traditional age/stage scientific theories. They also include multifaceted views influenced by a range of disciplines including health, psychology, sociology and anthropology. Our view of learning has changed from a 'filling an empty vessel' approach to an approach which views understandings as being socially constructed, with relationships, partnerships and participation central to learning. It is more about '**sparkling a flame**' than filling the vessel.

Children develop and actively construct their understanding in the social and cultural ways of their communities, that is, it depends on the context in which they are growing up. In other words, children's understandings are constructed as they interact with and make meaning from their experiences in their complex natural and constructed (physical and social) worlds. What does that mean for our pedagogy and practice?

One of the starting points in using the Framework is to understand our own pedagogy, where it comes from and how it affects each child. Our pedagogy is made up of principles and practices, influenced by our knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions. Many of our understandings, beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions are developed in our family and community life so in any setting there will be a wide range of both images of children and understandings about how best to support learning and development.

Our responsibility as early childhood educators working with and for Australia's children is to understand our own principles and practices, understand the Principles and Practices of the Framework, and work hard to make sure our work practices and principles are consistent with the Framework. Therefore, fundamental steps to implementing the Framework include:

- understanding the Principles
- making them part of our interactions and practices
- reflecting on them as we design our learning environments and plans for children's learning keeping the Learning Outcomes in mind.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

In what ways are your images of children and beliefs about how children learn and develop influencing what you do to support children's learning and development and the goals we set for them?

### **How do you believe children learn?**

Think about your interactions with children. Do they reflect what you say you believe about how children learn?

What understandings are you building from your partnerships with children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families? How do you demonstrate your openness to new ideas and different perspectives? What are the new understandings you are building and in what ways do these change the perspectives and understandings that you have about children's learning and belonging?

## Going deeper

What theories and perspectives influence your practices? Do you use these ideas in an intentional way? How do you talk about them with your team, other educators and your families? Does your setting's vision statement reflect theoretical perspectives as well? Are your theories and perspectives inclusive of other cultures, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?

Using the table in the resource section, *Theoretical Perspectives in Early Childhood* (on page 54), think about an occasion when there is conflict between children. Consider how an educator using the following approaches might respond: behaviourist, developmental, socio-cultural, critical and post structuralist.

## TRY OUT

Look at a scenario that you or your team would like to talk about. Think about two different theories and discuss how you would use each theory in practice in regard to the scenario.

Contact your neighbouring setting or work with a cluster of settings and find ways to discuss and share ideas.

## HEAR ABOUT

### **A journal entry**

*I like a framework because it doesn't tell you what to do – it helps organise your thinking and action. If I support my colleagues to 'unpack' the Framework I will be asking 'Does this fit with what we think and do in our program?' It's such an opportunity to consider what I believe, why I do what I do and how, and find out if others can see that. I have not really linked back to theorists since I was studying. However, I know this impacts on my work as do my own experiences as a child and a learner. The other thing about the Framework is it will allow me to have a conversation with our local childcare centre and school. It will be good to talk with others who are also wondering what parts of what we do fit and where might we need to make changes.*

*I need to consider how I will reflect the Framework's concepts of belonging, being and becoming in my day to day practice. These concepts align with my perception of the community's image of children and the way we demonstrate this in our learning environments. First step is to question how I engage with and enact the Framework's Principles.*

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework p.9 and p.11
- Theoretical Perspectives in Early Childhood
- Reflect Respect Relate. The *Reflect Respect Relate* resource is designed to encourage discussion and debate linking with educational theories and practices
- Framework in Action, Story 1



### **The Early Years Learning Framework**

**Principle 3:** *High expectations and equity*

**Practice:** *Learning environments*

**Outcome 2:** *Children are connected with and contribute to their world*

## 5. PARTNERSHIPS: WORKING WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

### WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families...Partnerships are based on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations and attitudes, and building on the strength of each other's knowledge (Framework, p.12).*

### THINK ABOUT

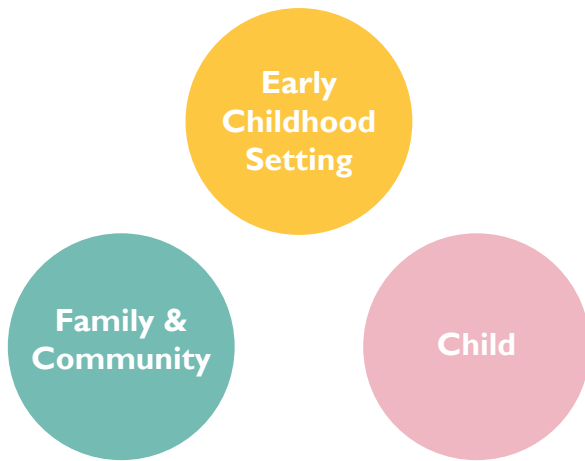
The Framework has children's learning at the core. It is the way we build genuine relationships and partnerships with families that underpins and enables this learning to occur. Building genuine partnerships involves a commitment to respectful and reciprocal relationships and to supporting families as children's first and most influential teachers.

Developing relationships and partnerships with all families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, is integral to ongoing, open and honest communication. Culturally competent educators acknowledge the diversity of communities and are inclusive of all family groups. This will ultimately impact on the wellbeing of children and families as a whole. When this partnership extends to the wider community, including other support professionals, wellbeing is strengthened further for all. If a service does not meet the needs and aspirations of families and communities, it can result in them going away dissatisfied and seeking support elsewhere—or even not using the service in the first place. It can also exacerbate the continuing trauma and grief suffered by people and their communities. In addition, it also means that we are failing in our obligation to provide appropriate services for all Australian residents and citizens.

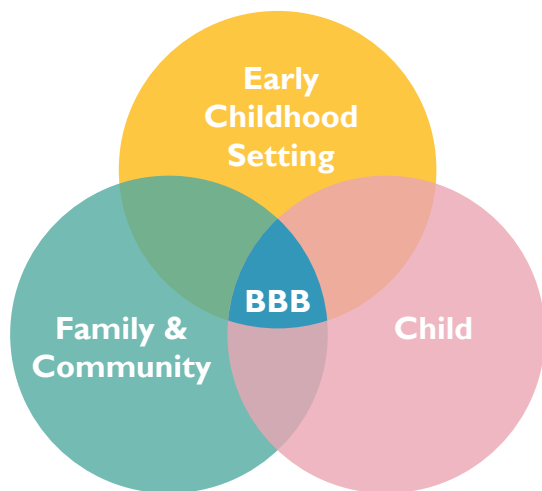
Early childhood settings are potentially places and spaces for building social connections and a feeling of belonging to the community. Developing relationships and working in partnership requires understanding and respecting each family's nature, culture and home

language/s. Careful consideration needs to be given to those families who may arrive in our settings already feeling alienated and unsure based on their previous experiences or circumstances. To establish genuine relationships and partnerships with families, educators find authentic ways to listen to and speak with families. Consideration should be given to when, where and the way in which we engage with families, not forgetting that we are striving for a sense of belonging for all our families. It is important to be mindful that past experiences may influence the way that families approach building relationships with us. How can we proceed with sensitivity and respect? Do we position ourselves as keepers of early childhood knowledge and see it as our business rather than a partnership with families? It is now recognised that it is our growing of relationships with families and our capacities to engage families in meaningful ways that underpin everyone's sense of belonging, being and becoming within our settings. It is up to us as educators to build an understanding of children's families and communities, spark the process of developing relationships and strengthen the connections between family, community and educational setting.

Children's sense of belonging and their learning are challenged when there is little connection between their family, their community and their early childhood setting. When children experience disjuncture between their worlds or even the collision of their worlds, their opportunities to grow in belonging, being and becoming are limited.



When the major aspects of their lives intersect through strong connections and understandings, and these understandings are incorporated into planning for children’s learning, children are much more likely to succeed and have a strong sense of belonging.



## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

How and when do you begin relationships and communicate with families?

How do you continue to build relationships and communicate with families?

How do you celebrate children’s success and development with families?

How do you know about the learning that is valued and expected for children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within their family and community local cultural context?

In what ways do you ensure that your early childhood setting, decision making and employment processes reflect all local families and community members?

In what ways do you broach difficult issues that arise and engage in problem solving with families?

How is responsibility for learning and teaching shared with families and community?

Draw the three spheres for a particular child in your setting and how you see the connections between the three spheres. How much do they intersect?

In what ways could they be strengthened to increase the child’s sense of belonging and opportunities to be an involved learner?

## Going deeper

A parent, recently settled in Australia, spoke with a staff member and said “In Australia, you always tell us what not to do, but you never tell us what to do”. Think about this/discuss this within your team. How do you share knowledge with families and make aspects of your program explicit?

How do you share decision making with your families? What are you willing to share decision making about? What more could be considered?

## TRY OUT

Look at your parent information and entrance area. What does it tell you about the place of families in your setting? What messages do they give families about their place in your setting?

Do a parent survey to gain an insight into how families feel relationships are continuously being built. Consider a telephone survey as a more personal way to gain information. What other ways could you gain insights from families?

How well does your environment welcome each child’s family and support their confidence to work in partnership with you for their child’s learning? Consider how you might assess how your environment is supporting wellbeing.

## HEAR ABOUT

Jasper is ten months old and spends part of his week in my family day care. He has been making a variety of sounds for some time now. I have noticed sounds in response to people speaking and singing with him, and also a self soothing while settling to sleep. I have captured a couple of moments on camera of Jasper expressing such delight at his sound production and even have some footage of the particular sound he makes when separating from Dad – these are quite distinct. What an opportunity for connection.

Jasper's father and I look at the footage together and he 'hears' his child being unsure and questioning. He says 'I really feel like Jasper and I am having a conversation', which got me reflecting on the opportunity to make this learning richer and more visible. I have made a plan to be aware of being intentional in engaging in culturally appropriate conversation with Jasper. I do some reading about children's understanding of language and reflect on how important language is for identity.

I will listen intently to Jasper. Wait and leave space for him, engage in turn taking and build a shared understanding on what we are conversing on. This includes having a mutual gaze and attention on his purpose. Listening intently means there may be silence because I am also watching intently for his action. As the adult I am trying to be comfortable with not asking continual questions and making space to 'be'. Someone took a photo of Jasper and me in the garden looking and listening.

The invisible connection between us is almost visible in the photo. I complete this documentation by adding the quote 'The child has a hundred languages' (Malaguzzi 1993) and we

put the photo in Jasper's folder, and place it in our reading place.

Looking at my Framework I see the development of belonging, being and becoming in this experience for Jasper and for me. I have found a path towards making visible the rich competency of a baby and have strived towards all five of the Learning Outcomes. When I speak with my peers and to Jasper's dad we talk most about Outcome Four (not the more obvious Five) because at this point in time it seems to be more about developing dispositions in learning and knowing than sound production and conversation.

The journey continues...

### Cooper's Story

*Partnerships underpin the practice of the Early Years Learning Framework. When educators actively contribute to genuine and inclusive partnerships they gain shared insights and perspectives about each child. The Framework recognises families as children's first and most influential teachers and promotes partnerships that build on the strength of each other's knowledge. By creating welcoming environments where all children and families are respected we build trust, open communication and shared decision making. In the photo below, Cooper's sense of belonging, his sound wellbeing and his involvement is evident as he reads his portfolio compiled by his educators in partnership with his family.*

**How are partnerships encouraged in your setting? Are your communications inclusive of all members of the child's family? How are fathers, grandfathers, uncles and brothers welcomed?**



## The Early Years Learning Framework

Principle 2: Partnerships

Practice: Continuity of learning and transitions

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, p.12
- Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001)
- 'Asking powerful questions' (Voght et al., 2003)
- Reflect Respect Relate—Interwoven throughout the *Reflect Respect Relate* resource is the importance of relationships with families and children and connecting with children's lives beyond the early years setting (experiences and language)
- Framework in Action, Stories 28 and 33.

### Collecting bush tucker to make jam



### The Early Years Learning Framework

Principle 4: *Respect for diversity*

Practice: *Cultural competence*

Outcome 2: *Children are connected with and contribute to their world*



# 6. CULTURAL COMPETENCE

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences (Framework, p.16).*

### THINK ABOUT

Cultural competence will be a new term for many of us. It is an evolving concept and our engagement with it will contribute to its evolution. It has been defined as *a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural settings* (Tong and Cross in VACCA 2008 p.23). Underlying cultural competence are the principles of trust, respect for diversity, equity, fairness, and social justice. Cultural competence reinforces and builds on our work of the last two or three decades as we have endeavoured to challenge and address injustice, racism, exclusion and inequity through legislation, awareness raising, rights education and an anti-bias curriculum. At the heart of cultural competence is our aspiration for everyone to be strong and confident in belonging, being and becoming through understanding and empathy, affirmation and opportunity. Cultural competence is about our will and actions to build understanding between people, to be respectful and open to different cultural perspectives, strengthen cultural security and work towards equality in opportunity. Relationship building is fundamental to cultural competence and is based on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations and attitudes, and subsequently building on the strength of each other's knowledge, using a wide range of community members and resources to build on their understandings.

The five Principles and the Practice of the Framework are critical to the development of cultural competence.

Cultural competence in early childhood settings is important if we are to make a difference in the lives of children and families and ensure that our children are growing up to be proud and confident learners. It is the intent of the Framework that we all strengthen our cultural competence. At the heart of cultural competence is the ability to interact respectfully, constructively and positively with children, families, staff and community. This includes educators recognising and promoting the critical importance culture plays in developing children's sense of belonging, being and becoming.

The Framework provides new possibilities for all early childhood educators to think about and act so that all children are strong in belonging, being and becoming. It also provides possibilities for all children to experience:

- learning that is engaging
- relationships that are affirming
- resilience with a strong sense of wellbeing
- curriculum that builds success for life
- confidence and strength in personal and cultural identity.

The development of a strong sense of identity is critical in the very earliest years of life and underpins the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the Framework. Culture is the fundamental building block of identity and the development of a strong cultural identity is essential to children's healthy

sense of who they are and where they belong. Children must have access to services that nurture, celebrate and reinforce their culture and support the development of their cultural identity.

Cultural identity comes from having access to:

- your culture—its institutions, land, language, knowledge, social resources, economic resources
- the institutions of the community (lifestyle)—its codes for living (social and environmental), nutrition, safety, protection of physical, spiritual and emotional integrity of children and families
- cultural expression and cultural endorsement (Durie 2003).

Being culturally competent doesn't mean denying our own culture or having to know everything about all cultures. Rather, it is about being willing to find out more about the cultural identities of the children and families in our community and using this knowledge to develop trusting relationships, respectful interactions, understandings of alternate world views, meaningful learning experiences, appropriate assessments, and firm affirmation of each child and their family.

What is culture? Culture can be defined as 'what we create beyond our biology. Not given to us, but made by us' (Williams, in MacNaughton 2003, p.14). Using this definition, culture incorporates the scope of human diversity and ways of being, such as gender, ethnicity, class, religion, ability, age, and sexuality. As culturally competent educators we need to think deeply about how our work can support each child's developing identity and self worth.

Respect for diversity requires us to act ethically and professionally. To act ethically, we need to think about our own values, beliefs and attitudes related to diversity and difference and acknowledge and address any bias that we may hold. Recognising and addressing bias is part of becoming a culturally competent educator. The practice of cultural competence requires a whole-of-setting focus that promotes equity and respect for diversity for all as well as a strong approach to countering racism and bias.

Belonging, being and becoming are not new concepts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. They are the essence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities. Access to learning in early childhood programs should be maximised, without compromising the development of a strong personal

and cultural identity through a respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, home languages, capabilities and behavioural practices, remembering that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have high expectations that their children will achieve the same educational outcomes as any other children in the program.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

How do you understand culture?

What does cultural competence mean for children, family, community, educator, early childhood setting?

How might your culture, or way you see and understand the world:

- affect the relationships you have with children, families, colleagues and community?
- advantage some children and families, yet disadvantage others?

What opportunities do you provide for parents to engage with you in ways that respect and value their culture?

How do you support children to explore groups to which they belong without reinforcing stereotypes?

How do you assist children to gather information, ask questions, seek clarification and consider possibilities about their own lives?

## Going deeper

Culturally competent individuals are likely to have, among other things, a strong knowledge of how their own culture shapes their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours and an awareness of the limited value of stereotyping. Explore these ideas in your next professional discussion.

How are you going to use the Framework for more equitable outcomes?

## TRY OUT

Walk around your setting and take note of the images on the walls and picture books. Do they show a balanced view of contemporary Australians? Are they inclusive or do they present bias or stereotypical representations?



## HEAR ABOUT

### Being Australian

At our preschool, a young child expressed amazement that ‘an Australian girl’ could speak Vietnamese. The staff members thought about what this comment might reveal about how children understood ‘being Australian’. We asked each child whether they thought they were Australian and audio-taped their responses to the question. Their responses were varied, and included many children who didn’t know either way, and a large number who responded “No”. The ‘no’ responses usually included identifying with another cultural group. The children’s responses revealed an ‘us and them’ way of thinking about identity and diversity. It became very clear in the explanations that they understood ‘being Australian’ was closely linked to the way you look and speak. As a team we asked ourselves the same question, and listened to each of our stories of identity and how we came to ‘be Australian’. The stories we shared

helped us to understand our individual cultural identities and our collective understanding of ‘being Australian’. We examined our pedagogy uncovering the ways in which we unintentionally reinforced the children’s views. For example, we often said, “All the Vietnamese children go with Van for story time”. This sparked an exploration with the children into a more inclusive understanding of what ‘being Australian’ could mean. We began by identifying that Australians are people who live in Australia, and that all of us lived in Australia. From this premise we explored the questions:

If we are all Australians:

What do Australians look like?

What do Australians like to eat?

What games do Australians like to play?

What languages do Australians speak?

Through this process we had begun to recognise and break down some of the stereotypical ideas about what it means to be Australian.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, Principles, pp. 12–13
- Reflect, Respect, Relate. Respect for families, children and educators—their diversity, their richness and their aspirations is an underpinning aspect of *Reflect Respect Relate*.
- The journey for educators: growing competence in working with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures—the next section in this Guide
- Framework in Action, Stories 14 and 16

# 7. THE JOURNEY FOR EDUCATORS: GROWING COMPETENCE IN WORKING WITH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURES

*We embrace with pride, admiration and awe these great and ancient cultures we are truly blessed to have among us, cultures that provide a unique, uninterrupted human thread linking our Australian continent to the most ancient prehistory of our planet (Rudd, 2008).*

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Early childhood educators guided by the Framework will reinforce in their daily practice the principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention). The Convention states that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages (Framework, p.5).*

## THINK ABOUT

Cultural competence is much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, respect, communicate with, and effectively interact with, people across cultures (Framework p.16).

For this document we are defining 'cultural' as shared attitudes, values, goals, beliefs and practices that characterise an institution, organisation or group.

Likewise we are defining 'competence' as the ability of all educators to make appropriate decisions and effective actions in their setting regardless of the absence or presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

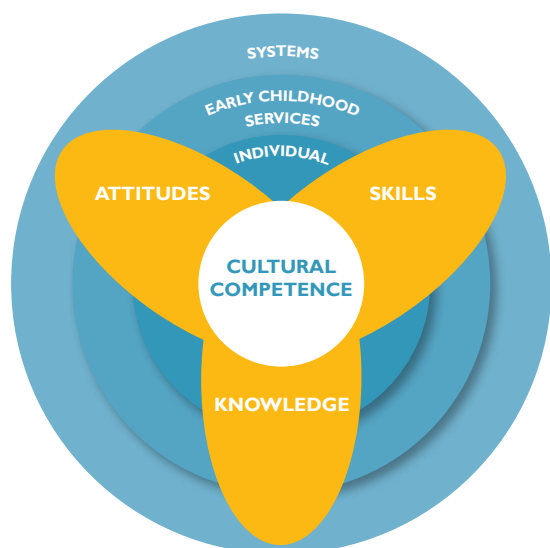
**Cultural competence as it relates to developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures** brings together those knowledges, behaviours, attitudes and policies that are required to engage, build and maintain relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all settings to effect positive change in early childhood education. This involves:

- cultural competence and cultural safety that go far beyond existing notions of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity
- cultural competence having a legitimate place in the positive experiences of all children in achieving improved educational outcomes
- cultural competence being integrated in all aspects of the delivery of programs in order to *make the difference* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and *close the gap* that exists in current educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

Building educators' competence in relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is a process that is underpinned by relationships, evolves over time and must involve attitudes, skills and knowledge. Cultural competence is a two way learning process. A culturally competent organisation that values and respects diversity helps everyone feel like they belong. More specifically, being familiar with the rich and long history of Australia, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, enriches all of us. In implementing this Framework educators must embed and sustain processes to:

- make decisions that are genuinely inclusive
- negotiate and set goals for children's ongoing learning
- model leadership, respect, responsibility and accountability
- refine, reflect on and apply skills for quality teaching and learning
- share responsibility for teaching and learning
- strengthen policy making, service delivery and practice, and continually monitor, reflect on and refine this process
- implement their professional obligation to embrace the principles of equal access, opportunity, and maintain a journey of learning.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE



**The elements which underpin successful cultural competence include:**

**Skills:**

- for living and working in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts (socially)
- for working in local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts (professionally)

**Knowledge:**

- understanding and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and contemporary societies
- understanding that the importance of connectedness to land and spirituality is the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity

**Attitudes:**

- exploring individual and societal values and attitudes.

*You need all three elements to claim to be culturally competent. If you remove one element then you are operating in an incompetent state (Rose, 2009).*

High quality educators will use their professional knowledge and skills and the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the Framework to build their cultural competence and engage all children and families in children's learning. They will learn about each child, family, community and culture and use this to make sure every child has a fair go and the opportunities that are their rights.

**Cultural competence is always about building relationships.**

Cultural competence is a learning journey which is underpinned by respectful relationships between the children, families and educators, organisations and communities, which continually evolve. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse.

**Cultural competence needs to be applied on three levels:**

**Individual level: intra-personal**

- knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours

**Service level: interpersonal and intra-service**

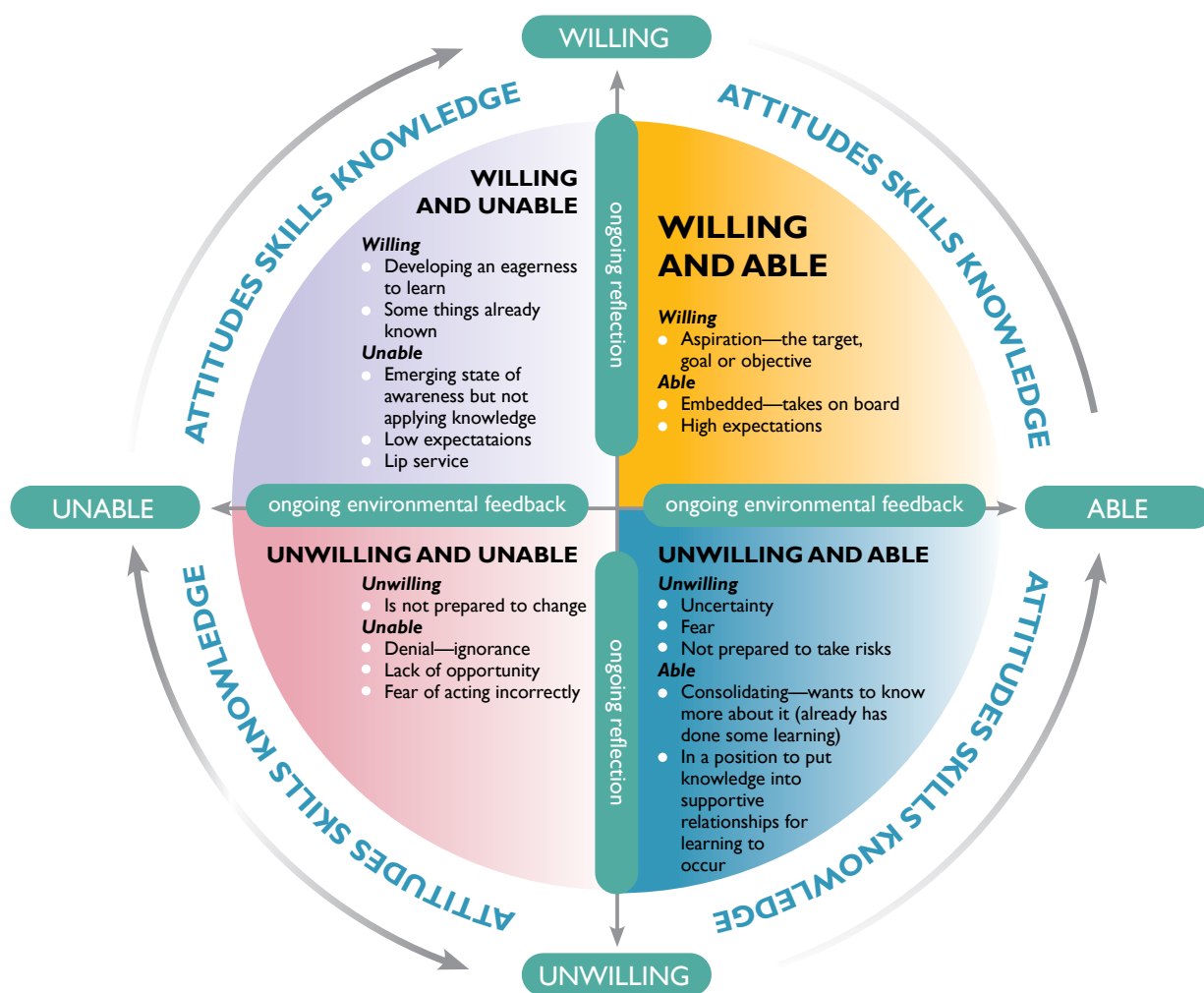
- management and operational frameworks and practices, expectations, including policies, procedures, vision statements and the voices of children, families and community

**Systems level: interpersonal and inter-services**

- how services relate to and respect the rest of the community, agencies, Elders, local community protocols, etc.

An open view is a precursor to enable critical reflection at individual, service and systems levels. In implementing the Framework it is the embedding of skills, knowledge and learning together with an open mind in cultural competence that supports ongoing change for children and educators. Growing cultural competence is driven by showing respect, acknowledging language, strengthening identity and developing relationships.

**LEARNING JOURNEY OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE**  
a journey, not an endpoint



## How does the Learning Journey of Cultural Competence work?

The three elements of cultural competence are Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge. These elements operate at three levels, Individual, Early Childhood Services and Systems. A learning journey of cultural competence occurs when ongoing reflection and environmental feedback involves and supports educators to move up and down the journey from unwilling and unable to willing and able. All three elements are critical components of cultural competence. Cultural competence is not static. As we move between and within diverse communities, our level of cultural competence changes in response to new situations, experiences and relationships.

## What does this mean for educators?

*Cultural competence is about your attitudes and how you assemble your social and professional toolkit [of knowledge and skills] in making education inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Rose, 2009).*

Educators will regularly assess themselves, their attitudes, their interactions and the learning environment for cultural competence as defined by Elders and community members.

In reflecting on their attention to cultural competence, educators consider the extent to which they:

- have nurtured strong family and community partnerships
- know and value the culturally specific knowledge about childhood, children and learning that is embedded within the community in which they are working
- critically reflect on their own views and understandings of early childhood theory, research and practice for the 'degree of fit' with local understandings, experiences and expectations
- use pedagogical practices that reflect knowledge of diverse perspectives and contribute to all children's wellbeing and successful learning.

All children demonstrate their learning in different ways. In growing cultural competence, educators will empower themselves to *look* for different ways of *belonging, being* and *becoming* and alert themselves to the dangers of making assumptions about how children *should* be learning and demonstrating their learning.

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enter early childhood settings with a strong sense of belonging. They learn from close kin and extended family from an early age through watching, listening and practising their language and culture, rich as it is in environmental and human surroundings, both explicitly and implicitly. Research tells us that families are the child's first educators.

*A number of significant studies from around the world have found that children must develop linguistic competence and thinking abilities in their first language in order to develop higher order academic skills for later learning in their second language...for example... the more children move towards balanced bilingualism, the greater the likelihood of cognitive advantages (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p.6).*

Further to this, on seeing learning differently and recognising this learning, albeit in ways they might not have expected, educators will be responsive to children in ways that are affirming of their cultural identity, contributing to their pride and strength.

A culturally competent program uses (involves) the full range of rich and meaningful cultural structures and resources that are available: extended families, Elders, traditional as well as current practices or stories drawn from a wide range of community types to avoid creating stereotypes (Martin, 2007, p.15).

Cultural competence is about assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build their capacity and sustain their strengths to support healthy relationships with families and communities, and to raise their children to be strong in their culture.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

- What does cultural competence mean in your practice, for children, family, community and educators?
- What do you know about the language/s that the children bring with them?
- How do you acknowledge the oral traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the curriculum?
- How do you demonstrate that you acknowledge and build on the context and discourse of each child and family?
- How will Elders, family and community members be invited to share culturally valued ways of creating, representing and responding? Are you creating time and opportunities for them to do this?
- How do you demonstrate high expectations of the learning capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the program and what does success look like for the individual child?
- In what ways do you support children's learning and use the cultural tools of the community to inspire all children's thinking?
- What do you know about the learning that is valued and expected for children within the family and community cultural context?
- If there are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in your setting, how do you raise awareness of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?
- In what ways will you build your cultural competence to make decisions that inform your practice to strengthen the belonging, being and becoming, opportunities and success of each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child?
- Who will you involve in your journey of learning?

## Going deeper

Over the years a large range of frameworks, research, programs and policies have been developed and implemented to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. While some improvements have been made, significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are still educationally disadvantaged. The Council of Australian Governments is committed to closing the gap in educational achievements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade. Early childhood education (with educators who are culturally competent) has a critical role to play in delivering this outcome (Framework, p.6).

What is implied by 'gap'? How might this draw attention away from children's strengths?

As an educator, how do you enhance the knowledge and skills of the child built by the family and community to abolish this gap?

How does the burden of the gap rest with the family, community or with you as the educator?

How are you going to use the Framework to enhance the child's right as a learner and therefore **close the gap?**

## TRY OUT

Culturally competent educators will continue to reflect on practice through professional learning and side by side discussion with communities and families.

Walk around your setting. Does it reflect the local children, family and community that you provide a service for? How do you know?

Do members of your community come into your setting regularly?

What are the barriers for families in accessing and feeling comfortable in your service?

Is the learning inclusive of the cultural knowledge and understanding of the children, family and communities in your service?

## HEAR ABOUT

### **A starting point for a team of educators in a children's centre**

Our centre has 130 families using its long day care and kindergarten programs. We have three busy rooms ranging from babies to toddlers and children aged 3-5 years. In 2009 we began implementing an Aboriginal Cultural Studies program. As the leader of the centre in a relatively new team the challenges included developing the team's confidence and understandings and uncovering the barriers to staff exploring ideas about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with children and families.

We sat down as a team and looked at a Learning Continuum in relationship to what staff felt they:

- knew about
- understood
- connected with.

In regards to developing cultural competence and a genuine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective throughout the program, one of the outcomes of this discussion was that staff were able to identify:

- resources and activities they felt comfortable with
- the relevant curriculum documents we could use
- the parents and community members we could tap into.

Issues that were problematic and concerning for staff included:

- fear of getting it wrong
- lack of knowledge about culturally appropriate practices
- understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures differed from theirs in terms of things such as gender roles.

The journey continues.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, pp.7,12–13
- State and Territories Aboriginal Education and Employment Training Departments and Regional Aboriginal Education Offices
- Framework in Action, Story 8

# 8. LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Play provides opportunities for children to learn, as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Children's immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy being (Framework, p.15).*

## THINK ABOUT

Play is a valued process for children's learning, thinking, imagination, story making and communication. The play of young children includes many different types including sensory, explorative, physical, creative, symbolic, projective, role, and dramatic play and games with rules. All are important aspects of children's learning and development. Play provides children with opportunities to express a sense of agency and demonstrate their competence and be leaders in their own learning. Play can provide children with a sense of belonging and being and supports the development of children's individual and social identity.

Children use play to participate in their culture, to develop the literacy of their culture, to order the events in their lives and to share those events with others.

Through play, children develop an understanding of their social worlds. They learn to trust, form attachments, share, negotiate, take turns and resolve conflict. Since play varies from individual to individual, family to family and across cultural groups, play enables children to experience and to begin to understand difference and diversity.

Play for young children begins with reflexive action and exploration of their immediate world using their senses.

Through the sensory and embodiment play of babies, children's development of body, self, their risk taking and their confidence to explore and make choices is strengthened.

Play develops into planned and experimental exploring, problem solving, consolidating and practising, imagining and creating.

As children develop the capacity to pretend, they develop their own worlds using objects to take on the roles and relationships they wish to explore.

Symbolic play (make believe, or pretend play where familiar activities may be performed even in the absence of materials or social context—for example when a child mimes talking on a phone) is crucial in supporting children's developing literacy.

Through symbolic play children create a fictional world and tell their stories.

Social play and dramatic play provide a space where friendship groups are formed, power relationships negotiated, and challenging life experiences are explored.

Play provides children with opportunities to be supported to learn to make play safe, fair, just and equitable for all participants.

Rich, purposeful play contributes to the development of literacy through:

- oral language—using language to script the play, negotiate, describe imaginary props or act out different roles
- metalinguistic development—naming and renaming objects
- understanding of authentic purposes of reading and writing
- moving children into their 'zones of proximal development' where they use increasingly complicated language (Bodrova, 2007).



## What about children who are not players?

While play is universal, not all children or adults have the opportunity to play in a free and supported manner. The ability to imagine and play is a skill that can be learnt and in early childhood settings it is essential that educators in their curriculum decision making consider imagination and play as important aspects of children's learning.

For most children, play begins from birth. For some children, their early development and experiences may have compromised their capacities, knowledge and skills to be players. For these children, educators support children's development as a player using intentional teaching strategies to explicitly teach children the skills they need to be a successful player.

A useful way to assess children's play skills and plan intentional teaching strategies is the following progression spanning the birth – six age period.

- Imitates sounds and gestures
- Experiments with new sounds, gestures, reactions
- Pretends to be an adult, animal, monster
- Role reverses—uses a special toy as a significant other, talking to it, asking it questions, and then reverses roles and answers on its behalf
- Uses symbols and toys to represent characters, objects
- Takes on the role of others
- Engages in dramatic play separated from other play activities
- Drama. All of the above and increased improvisation. Ideas are tested and repeated.

(adapted from Jennings 1999, p.73)

As educators we facilitate learning through play when we use the Practices of the Framework and we consider that children learn from having:

- meaningful experiences with others who are more competent players. Competent players can resource, role model, extend, give specific play knowledge and facilitate children's entry and exit from play and their interaction with others
- access to and good attachment with primary caregivers
- uninterrupted and prolonged time to play
- a variety of spaces in which to play

- access to a range of resources that can be used to enrich and extend their play
- opportunity to pursue their interests, passions and theories
- the skills and knowledge to engage in a range of play experiences
- resources that are rich with sounds, words and materials that are culturally and contextually meaningful.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

How did you play as a child? What are the aspects from your childhood play that you think are important for children today? What role did adults take when you played as a child?

How do you play now?

How can children make choices about resources and play spaces? Do they always have access to the resources and spaces they want and need? Who makes decisions about resources and spaces? Is there shared decision making between adults and children?

To what degree are children involved in the various types of play at your setting? What conditions extend and limit their involvement?

How does your environment support learning through different types of play?

Is there an equal balance in the time and resourcing for play in the indoors and outdoors? What potential does the outdoors hold that may not be fully realised?

In what ways do you use the cultural tools of the community to inspire children's thinking and play?

## Going deeper

### Assessing play

In what ways do you document and assess play?

Do your assessments do justice to children's play and their self initiated activities?

Play is rich with meaning but these meanings remain undiscovered unless as educators we devote time to observe, document and interpret the meaning inherent in children's play. Think about: Which children play alone? Which children play together? What are children's interests, dispositions and attitudes and how do these influence their play? How does children's play progress over time?

How do you use your observations and documentation to plan for play?

What play engages and involves children at a deep level? Are there some episodes of play that are superficial, repetitive, exclusive or limiting for some children? How does play affect children's wellbeing and sense of belonging? Who, and how do we decide? In what ways can we strengthen children's involvement in meaningful, deep level play?

How do you make visible the connections between children's play and their learning—for planning, for families, with children?

How do you engage with children when their play is unfamiliar, makes you uncomfortable or challenges your 'rules' of engagement or expectations?

In what ways do you show respect for children's play choices?

How do you share the excitement and passion for play with families?

## TRY OUT

Adults can take a range of roles, set up and facilitate play, observe, monitor and support children's participation. You can direct the play or you can be a co-player. To reflect and evaluate your own skills in play, take a video of you and your peers involved in play with the children. View the footage and discuss what roles the educators took on, using the following roles identified by Jones and Reynolds (1992).

- Stage manager
- Mediator
- Player
- Scribe
- Assessor and communicator
- Planner

Where were the educators positioned? What language could you hear? Did supervision and routines cause missed play opportunities?

Discuss the different play roles and the ones in which you feel most comfortable. What impact might this have on children's play?

Develop a play pedagogy for your setting.

- Consider your beliefs about play and learning.
- Consider your systems. In what ways do you manage all your responsibilities (such as, for example, safety, routines, relationships, tasks,

intentional scaffolding) and engage with children in play?

- What opportunities do you have to practise your own co-playing skills?
- How, when and why do you challenge children's choices in play?
- What different roles do you take in children's play? Why?
- In what ways could professional development opportunities strengthen your support of children's play?

Review how you currently market and promote play-based learning to the community. Consider making some resources, such as posters, newsletters or a collection of powerful stories about the learning and teaching possibilities in different play experiences.



### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 3: High expectations and equity*

*Practice: Learning through play*

*Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators*

## HEAR ABOUT

1. Several parents have approached me concerned that children are spending too much time playing and not enough time ‘learning’, especially to do with literacy. These concerns provided me with the opportunity to promote the value of play and communication in developing children’s literacy skills.

The children have been doing amazing things with the clay where there has been great evidence of their imagination, symbolic play and thinking skills. Joseph made four dinosaur models, describing them as four tyrannosaurus rex, who were really mean and out hunting for meat. He made a tree with a bird dinosaur—a pterodactyl, but he was safe because he could fly away. Emily made a birthday cake using pop sticks for candles and said it was for her cat Monty who was going to be six years old. Luca told his friends he had been watching the Grand Prix on television and he made two cars and then created a track for them to race on. He gave a commentary as he manipulated the two cars on his track.

I took photos of the children’s creations and recorded their stories. I used this documentation with parents to illustrate the importance of children creating and representing events and telling stories for the development of literacy and learning to read. Their stories have important meaning to the children and help them understand that they can create a representation (using symbols) of their understanding, that their stories can be documented with symbols and that the written word has meaning.

2. Peter, aged 4, is tentative in his relationships with other children and has limited imagination and entry skills to engage in play. He sits silently

when we have small group singing and does not participate in any of the actions for finger plays. As a staff team we planned for Peter to join in small music and movement groups. Sue, our teacher, played with the children to create new sounds and gestures and imitate and act out different animals. While hesitant at first, Peter became very vocal at imitating different sounds and to our surprise became very animated acting the role of a cat chasing a ball of string. We continued with these experiences, moving from individual activities to playing in pairs (such as Row, Row, Row Your Boat) and then some group games (Down in the Pawpaw Patch). Peter became more animated and involved each time. One morning we had the story ‘Captain Pugwash’ and we put out paper bags and scraps for the children to make puppets. Helped by George, Peter drew a face on the paper bag and then put it on his hand and ran around laughing, “Pugwash, Pugwash, a good pirate, a good pirate, he’s good not bad”. The other children celebrated his achievement with much laughter.

For Peter this was the beginning of his personifying with characters.

A couple of weeks later, Peter on arrival went to the dress up box and put on a coat and flowered hat, looked at himself in the mirror and ran outside giggling. He took the steering wheel from the shed, put it against some outdoor blocks and pretended to drive the car. After a few minutes he ran around calling out, “crash, crash, crash, car crash, bad car crash” and then made ambulance noises. Although he played alone he was totally engaged and kept repeating his theme.

For Peter this was the beginning of his role taking and enactment.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, p.15
- Reflect Respect Relate—In *Reflect Respect Relate* environments that provide for play and the development of enabling learning dispositions are explored
- Framework in Action, Stories 24 and 35

# 9. CONTINUITY OF LEARNING AND TRANSITIONS

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Children bring family and community ways of belonging, being and becoming to their early childhood settings. By building on these experiences educators help all children to feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn (Framework, p.16).*

### THINK ABOUT

The importance of continuity of learning and transitions is one of the Practices in the Framework and this section of the Guide will help you support children and their families in managing change and making transitions.

Children make many transitions throughout childhood, and as these transitions occur they need support in the separating and settling processes, to enable them to build trust in their new environments. In addition to the various types of transitions referred to in the Framework (p.16), young children in early childhood settings make transitions:

- from home to early childhood settings
- between different early childhood settings: care to kindergarten and back to care
- from the baby room, to the toddler room, to the kindergarten room, to school
- between different home settings, eg shared parenting
- when there is a new addition in the family or a loss in the family
- during everyday routines in an early childhood setting (play, to group time, to lunch, to play etc).

In exploring and developing understandings to effectively manage change, children need support in learning to:

- discover that changes that are expected and timely are easier to handle
- build on understandings from previous changes to help manage new ones
- develop meaningful rituals that can help in times of change
- choose special, loved people or transitional objects to help bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar
- recognise that at times of some change, emotions may take some time to resolve
- discover that some new safe situations can provide new opportunities
- discover that they have some agency over some changes in their lives
- begin to explore ways to support others during change
- realise that uncertainty and change are part of life.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

What transitions do you make every day in your own lives and how do you feel? How do you cope with them? Would this be similar or different for children?

What signals a transition for children? How do you know what children understand of transitions?

What communication is occurring between adults when children are in transitions?

Do children and families have a voice in their transitions? How are they heard?

In whose interests are the transitions designed – child, educator, family, school? Who makes the decisions and how can schools and prior to school settings work together with families to ensure that everybody's interests are included?

Cultural and family obligations mean some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families will be transient. How do you involve these children and families in a meaningful way?

As a preschool educator, how do you use the Principles and Learning Outcomes of the Framework to document and report a child's learning to inform school based educators in a meaningful way as they plan for children's learning using the Australian Curriculum?

### Going deeper

The Framework, page 16, talks about children bringing ways of belonging, being and becoming to their early childhood setting. When children make transitions in your setting are you considering their belonging, being, becoming? Choose a transition that is occurring in your setting and consider children's experience of belonging, being and becoming within that transition. Could transitions look different for each child?

## TRY OUT

List all the transitions that happen in your setting every day. Choose one of the transitions you would like to improve. Brainstorm ways in which it could look different from a child's perspective and then from an adult's perspective.

Now, using the examples of evidence described in the first Learning Outcome (children have a strong sense of identity) discuss how the transition routine might support children in developing a strong sense of identity. Are there other ways we can be doing this transition?

Develop transition booklets that document the children's thoughts on what making a transition involves. These could be used to prepare and support children going through the transition process. For example, you could make a book in which children who have already made the transition to school give younger children advice about what they might need to know when it's their turn. Similarly, books could be made around moving from one room of the child care centre to another, from one setting to another, having a new baby at home, and saying goodbye to your mum or dad.

## HEAR ABOUT

Extract from the *Early Years Learning and Curriculum Continuity project: final report for the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services*, Dockett et al (2007).

### Children's perspectives on transition to school

The children who participated in this project through conversations and drawings had some clear views about school and about the differences between preschool and the first year of school. As did their parents, the children described school as a positive place particularly when they *had a good teacher* and when there were opportunities for play.

Playing featured highly on children's descriptions of what they liked about school. Playgrounds and specific playground equipment were the subject of many drawings. Some of the challenges children reported in play related to being asked to use equipment, or play games when they were not familiar with these. There was a definite sense that these children regarded play as a time to engage in familiar experiences, rather than to master new ones. Play was a means for ordering the day for some children. They described their day in terms of when play times

occurred, such as at recess and lunch times.

These perspectives contrast with comments from both parents and educators, who focused on the perceived educational value of play and children's opportunities to learn through play.

Children in both preschool and the first year of school noted that friends were important. Not knowing anyone when starting the first year of school was identified as contributing to feelings of anxiety and fear. Having a friend, or being sure about making friends, was associated with feeling happy and confident about starting school. Some children also noted that buddies and siblings were significant for them.

There was some ambiguity about the differences between Preschool and the first year of school. Children who had not yet started the first year of school suggested that there was not much difference. However, children who were already at school did note some major differences. These were described in terms of experiences, with the sense that there was more time for play at preschool. Both preschool and the first year of school were described as fun. One group of children remembered preschool as a time when they could make things. Their memories of making and the pleasure that came from that were evident in their discussions.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, p.16
- Reflect Respect Relate - *Reflect Respect Relate* provides a guide for professional debate and inquiry, ideally in teams and networks across service types. It provides an opportunity to build relationships between settings, share a common language and investigate the pedagogies supportive of children's transitions and learning
- Linke, P. (2006) ECA, Managing change with infants and young children
- Framework in Action, Stories 9, 10, 11 and 12



### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 2: Partnerships*

*Practice: Continuity of learning and transitions*

*Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world*

# 10. ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Assessment for children's learning refers to the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning (Framework, p.17).*

### THINK ABOUT

Children will demonstrate their learning in many and varied ways. Therefore the ways of gathering, documenting and analysing evidence to assess learning in your setting will also need to be varied. Documentation and assessment should not focus exclusively on the end points of children's learning and educators' teaching. Give equal consideration to the 'distance travelled' and recognise and celebrate not only the giant leaps that people take in their learning but the small steps as well. Educators use children's responses and body language to inform minute-by-minute decisions about where an interaction or learning experience might lead. In this way, assessment is occurring alongside learning.

Documentation records and creates evidence of learning. Documentation is turning the experiences that you observe, hear, see and feel into written or pictorial records that can be shared, revisited and extended over time. Rich documentation incorporates multiple perspectives and makes learning visible to the learning community. Multiple perspectives include voices of educators, children, peers, families and other professionals. Naturally we wouldn't seek to document every aspect of children's learning.

Assessment refers to an ongoing process of using observations or evidence to make judgements about children's learning and educators' pedagogy. Assessment includes interpreting children's learning against learning outcomes in order to plan for further learning and to report to parents and others about children's learning.

Documenting and assessing learning enables educators in partnership with families, children and other professionals to:

- adopt a range of approaches for observing, gathering and documenting children's learning
- use evidence to inform future planning, reflect on the effectiveness of teaching, make judgements about a child's developing capabilities and respond in appropriate ways
- use the Learning Outcomes of the Framework as key reference points against which children's progress can be assessed and communicated
- engage children as active participants in recording and reflecting on their learning and the processes of learning
- share information and strengthen partnerships to support children's learning in and beyond the early childhood program
- consider and evaluate curriculum, practices and relationships.

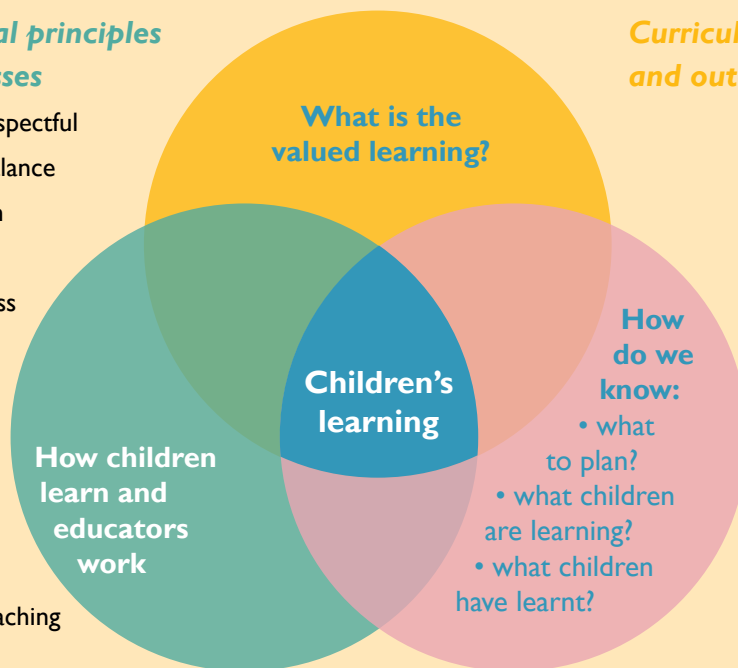
## The intersection of the three critical curriculum components for children's learning

*Research, evaluation and theory underpin early learning*

### **Pedagogical principles and processes**

Ethical and respectful  
 Child-adult balance  
 Joint attention  
 Prior learning  
 Responsiveness  
 Holistic  
 Continuity  
 Relationships  
 Involvement  
 Wellbeing  
 Equity  
 Intentional teaching  
 Rights:

- contribution
- participation
- language
- play



### **Curriculum content and outcomes**

Understandings  
 Dispositions  
 Knowledge  
 Content  
 Skills

### **Assessment**

Observation in learning experiences  
 Questioning  
 Feedback  
 Self assessment  
 Peer assessment  
 Reflection

'Built from Wardlaw 2008, National Curriculum Board Melbourne.'

This model places assessment within the context of two critical curriculum components that influence children's learning. It demonstrates the importance of assessment incorporating not only what children know and can do, but also assessment of our pedagogical principles and practices. Educators can assess their pedagogy using the Framework's Practices and Principles.

It is critical to remember that no one assessment tool or method will give you a full picture of a child's learning. Particular assessment tools have been designed for specific cultural contexts and purposes. To retain a holistic view of a child, educators use a range of assessment tools and methods. Sensitive users of assessment use real situations and methods

that open up, rather than narrow down learning.

They are aware that all learning occurs within a social context which includes their teaching.

In order to be assessed, children need to have had opportunities to learn any knowledge, skill or disposition, either through prior experience, intentional teaching, modelling or planned for through the curriculum and the learning environment.

To give children opportunities to show what they know and can do, we need to collect evidence over time and in a range of situations, rather than making judgements based upon limited or narrow information.



The following table provides some guidance for choosing assessment methods and tools.

Assessment principle	Assessment practice (what this means in practice)
<i>Assessment pedagogy</i>	
Ethical assessment	Systems and staff select assessment methods and tools which provide children with opportunities to confidently demonstrate their capabilities.
Dynamic assessment	Systems and staff select assessment methods and tools where interactions between the assessor and the assessed are in the context of meaningful, supportive and respectful interactions.
Forward measuring assessment	Systems and staff select assessment methods and tools which include the ability to assess children's potential, rather than just their actual development/learning.
Child oriented assessment	Systems and staff include assessment methods and tools where children can assess themselves.

### *Assessment content*

Assessment should match the curriculum

*Criteria for checking the content and method of assessment:*

- What is the *emphasis*? Is there an *over-emphasis* on things that can be easily measured?
- Are the *important understandings* able to be assessed?
- Is *community specific* valued content well represented?
- Are the assessment pedagogies not too *time consuming* leading to assessing skills or understandings which are not rich, complex or integrated?
- Are they the *most appropriate* or useful tools or methods?  
Sometimes, tools and *strategies that are 'easy'* to use are not always the most appropriate.
- Do they *encourage staff to teach to the assessment task, rather than planning a broader curriculum*? Remember: important learning for children may involve learning outside of set assessment tasks.

Fleer et al (2008)



### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 4: Respect for diversity*

*Practice: Learning environments*

*Outcome 4: Children are involved and confident learners*

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

What does observing documenting and assessing look like in your setting?

How does observing, documenting and assessing in your setting include children's and families' voices?

What does 'success' look like for individual children?

How do children experience 'success' on a daily basis? Who recognises and interprets 'success'?

How do you give children feedback about their learning?

How do you get children to assess their own learning?

How do you know about the learning that is valued and expected for children within the family and community local cultural context, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children? In what ways is this valued and assessed in your setting? By whom?

### Going deeper

Reflect on this quote:

*'When educators assess children's learning, their intention is to find out, make sense of what they discover and to use what has been learnt to facilitate ongoing learning. In this way, assessment becomes one part of the day to day process of teaching and learning. It is an integral rather than separate activity in the curriculum development process'* (Drummond 2003, p.14).

Do you agree or disagree? How do you currently view assessment? Consider if it is a tool used for 'testing' the end result or 'part of the day to day' process?

## TRY OUT

Gather the evidence you collect on children's learning. Compare the information to gauge if the ways you monitor children's learning are fair, credible and equitable. Are there more observations and evidence collected on one child than another?

Are there children who have been overlooked?

Are there learning areas that are not visible?

Are children only observed as individuals or as part of a social group? Does the evidence capture a holistic view of each child? Does the evidence represent children's broader family and cultural contributions?

On enrolment and at various 'check in' points ask families what they think success is looking like for their child. In partnership with the family, document joint hopes and aspirations for the child's wellbeing and learning that can be used in the planning process.

Create scrapbooks or learning stories that document the contribution of children's and families' ideas in your setting.

## HEAR ABOUT

### Assessing children's capacity to care, empathise and respect

#### **Observing**

Currently we have a broad curriculum focus on Outcome 1, point 4: children have a strong sense of identity. After the recent arrival of 'Peppa' the rabbit to the kindergarten, a number of observations were documented noting children banging on the rabbit cage, poking the rabbit with rulers, and feeding the rabbit play dough. The observations were discussed and analysed by staff and we decided to investigate the children's capacity to empathise with the rabbit.

#### **Assessing**

We began by assessing children's current knowledge by brainstorming with the children what they thought a rabbit would need to feel safe and cared for. It was a very short list. From the list an area was set up, using the children's ideas, for the children to experience being a rabbit.

#### **Documenting**

Staff collected evidence as the investigation unfolded—the initial brainstormed list, children's drawings, work samples, photographs, observations of the children being the rabbit, children's thoughts and comments about what rabbits think, do and learn.

#### **Analysing and assessing**

A second brainstorm a week later revealed that after experiencing being a rabbit, the children had far more ideas and insight into a rabbit's needs and feelings. Again the children's ideas were incorporated into the rabbit play area. Observations of the play revealed the play was becoming more sophisticated than just hopping and chewing on a carrot. The play now involved a person to care for the rabbits and began to focus upon the relationships between the rabbits. The documentation revealed rich individual and collective narratives of care and empathy and powerful evidence of learning across the investigation. These stories were shared through displays and learning stories, and enabled staff to reflect upon the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework pp.17–18
- Learning and Teaching Stories: Podmore and Carr (1999)
- Framework in Action Stories 6 and 25.  
The stories from the field provide a range of ways that educators have documented and assessed children's learning. They are unique and context specific snapshots and show that both the educators and children are learners.
- Reflect Respect Relate. The Involvement lens in *Reflect Respect Relate* supports educators in noticing children's intellectual engagement and the environments that support this.

# 1.1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

## WHAT THE FRAMEWORK SAYS

*Working in partnership with families, educators use the Learning Outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning. In order to engage children actively in learning, educators identify children's strengths and interests, choose appropriate teaching strategies and design the learning environment. Educators carefully assess learning to inform further planning (Framework, p. 9).*

## THINK ABOUT

The Framework identifies three types, or levels, of outcomes for planning for, facilitating and monitoring all children's learning:

- **belonging, being and becoming** are the big picture aims, or level 3 outcomes
- the **five Learning Outcomes with their 19 sub elements** are broad, longer term goals of integrated competencies, processes, understandings and dispositions, or level 2 outcomes
- **points of evidence** are the shorter term objectives and are often discrete skills or content, or level 1 outcomes that enable children to achieve the Learning Outcomes.

Belonging, being and becoming and the five Learning Outcomes describe life competencies which are dynamic and in a continual state of becoming—becoming more complex, richer and more expansive. They are not discrete skills to be achieved and checked off. Skilful educators use all three levels of outcomes in their planning, as they are embedded within, build on, and complement each other. Each level acts as an enabler for the next level.

The Framework has drawn on conclusive international evidence to identify the big picture and long term outcomes. These outcomes provide broad direction for early childhood educators in early childhood settings so that all children can experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life (Framework, pp.5–8).

When we plan for children's learning, we make locally based and culturally appropriate decisions, relevant to our children and communities about the content and skills each child needs to become competent and confident within each learning outcome. It is at this level that we notice and plan for a lot of variation guided by the Framework's Principle 3: high expectations and equity, believing in all children's capacities to succeed. Each child and group of children will be at different points in their journey towards the big picture outcomes that have been identified for all children. Children and groups of children will bring to the curriculum ranges of: interests and understandings; family and community experiences; developmental pathways and temperaments and dispositions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children bring to the curriculum their particular histories, cultures, languages and traditions of their families and community. Culture is central to a child's individuality, identity and sense of belonging and success in lifelong learning.

Children's early learning influences their life chances. In order that each child's aspirations in life and learning, of belonging, of being and of becoming, are not compromised through stereotyping or personal agenda, educators deliberately and thoughtfully create and broaden opportunities for children to explore, follow and expand a wide range of interests and roles. Educators find supportive ways to challenge stereotypical ideas which may limit children's

aspirations and engage children in understandings of alternative perspectives.

From our data collections, we identify what each child and group of children brings and use the information to plan and monitor learning experiences for children, using all three levels of outcomes so that each child is strong in belonging, being and becoming and each child expands their capacities within the five Learning Outcomes. This shifts the focus from just knowing content and having skills, to children applying their understandings in a range of contexts and developing dispositions to sustain, expand and deepen their enjoyment in learning and relationships, their capabilities and their ways of learning.

The outcomes tables detailed in the Framework (pp.20–44) support planning, monitoring and assessing children’s learning and educators’ practices, to facilitate learning within each of the outcomes.

## TALK AND REFLECT ABOUT

How does your curriculum decision making demonstrate high expectations for all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and provide opportunities and access to learning to enable them to be successful learners, and confident and strong in their identities?

What is important to you and your team for children to learn? What would the outcomes of this learning look like? How are they similar/different to the ones in the Framework? Do you think there are any outcomes missing from the Framework or are there any you would add?

In what ways do the selection of resources, the images, the grouping of children, the interactions and the learning opportunities you choose for children maintain, limit, challenge or broaden opportunities, aspirations and understandings of children’s sense of how they belong, how they can be and who they can become?

How do you ensure that children feel safe, secure and strong physically, emotionally and spiritually? In what ways do you understand the meaning of these terms for all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

Considering your setting’s latest plans for children’s learning, at what levels are the outcomes? In what ways are you considering all three levels? Are you currently planning for children’s higher level thinking and dispositions? How does the Framework support you to do this? What other information do you need? How might children’s desire to ‘belong’ lead them to adopt the majority culture and ways of being? What are the risks of belonging, or not belonging? How do you as educators influence children’s belonging and becoming in their own culture?

## Going deeper

*Keep in mind always the present you are constructing. It should be the future you want* (Alice Walker, 1989, in *The Temple of my Familiar*. London: Penguin Books).

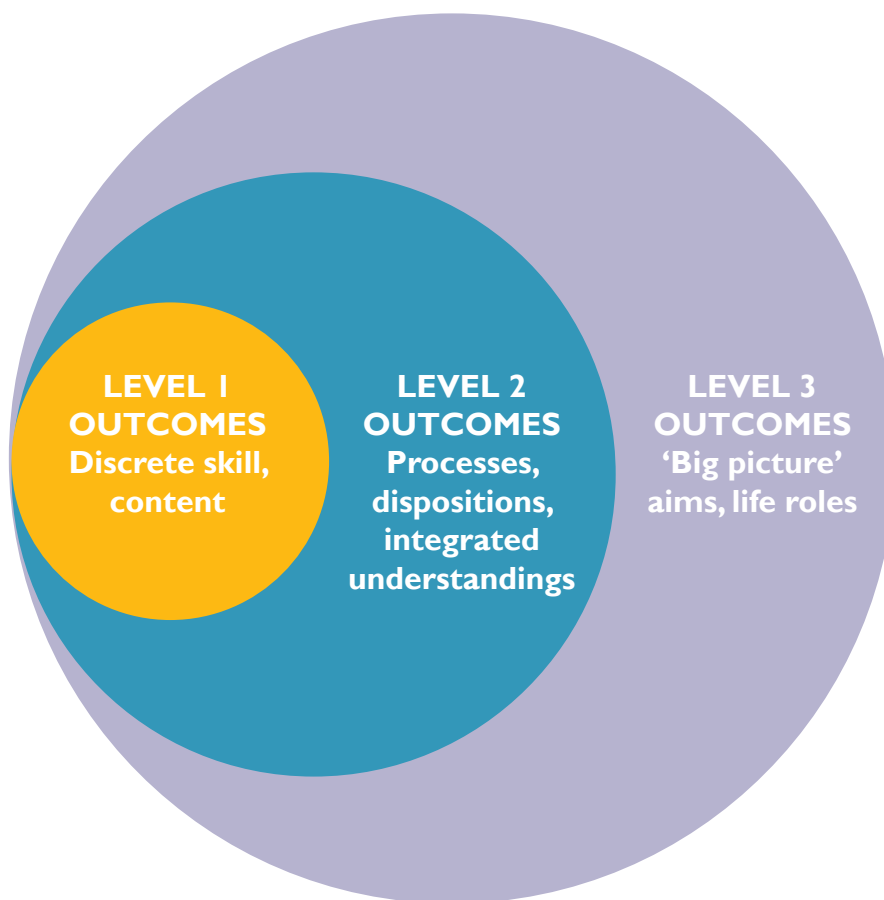
With the above quote from Alice Walker in mind, discuss *A Vision for Children’s Learning* (Framework, p.7). How do your planned outcomes, principles and practices contribute to the Framework’s vision for the future of and for our children? What does it mean for how you act and teach right now?

## TRY OUT

Consider the following **outcome statements** from the Framework.

- *All young Australians become:*
  - *successful learners*
  - *confident and creative individuals*
  - *active and informed citizens* (p.5)
- *Fundamental to the Framework is a view of children’s lives as characterised by belonging, being and becoming* (p.7).
- *The Framework conveys the highest expectations for all children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. It communicates these expectations through ... five Learning Outcomes* (p.8).
- *There is provision for educators to list specific examples of evidence and practice that are culturally and contextually appropriate to each child and their settings...The points described within each outcome are relevant to children of all ages* (p.19).

Using the diagram below, consider at which level each of these **outcome statements** fits and discuss why.



(Developed from Spady, 1994 & Costa & Garmston)

Display the Learning Outcomes described in the Framework to your community. Ask them to share their understandings and beliefs about what each outcome means for them.

Literacy and numeracy capabilities are important aspects of the *Children are effective communicators* Learning Outcome and are vital for successful lifelong learning. Examine your current documentation and the value given to early experiences in literacy and numeracy in your setting. Find and share resources that promote the everyday aspects of literacy and numeracy in children's play. Examine how they fit within the three levels of outcomes.

Consider working in this way for each key component of learning for each of the Learning Outcomes.



### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 1: Relationships*

*Practice: Intentional teaching*

*Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators*

## HEAR ABOUT

1. Mai is four and attends our kindergarten setting several times a week. She has a strong identity as a conservationist and a family culture strong in performance and creation. She will often ask her family questions such as “How much water is there in the world anyway?” What a question! On the wall we have an interactive space for ‘home noticing’ and when this question is written up the children begin to discuss and act upon their theories. “Why does the water not ‘fall off’ the world? Is this rain? Why is rain always blue in books? What colour are tears? Did you know some kids have never had a bath? That place called the Red Sea—is it coloured red or is that a ‘trick’ name? Can you eat an iceberg?”

As the adult in the space I am not sure of many of the answers and must give some of my power away to true inquiry. I find myself saying quite often “I am not sure. How could we find out?”

We explore many avenues and in this experience I am the prompter, the organiser of ideas, the resourcer, the reviewer and the recorder. We call the water board and they are of little use. It seems they are not sure either and are a bit cross about not knowing; we all learn something about being embarrassed and confused! We melt ice, we dig trenches, we collect tears in glass jars and look at paintings at the local gallery. One of our grandpas comes in to talk about the water in his dam and tells us about a dreaming story. We explore books that represent water differently on each page because the artists have different visions.

Mai, the child who began this journey decides while looking at the different representations of water, that tears change colour according to how we feel. She ‘knows’ our experiments do not confirm this but believes it in her ‘imagination’. The documentation involves records of conversation, sequences of photos, children’s voices as they reflect on themselves in an experience, collections of story and reference books and numerical data around theories. Signs and maps are made and structural representations in clay, sand, ice and charcoal, are preserved or photographed.

As the children slowly begin to drift towards other wonderings and theories (Does a circle have sides? What’s that straw called that feeds your baby in your womb?), we have a review meeting. What do we know that we did not know before? How much water is there in the world anyway? “TONNES and LOTS” they say. I look back at our mind map and read to the children these very words. At the beginning we said that ‘TONNES and LOTS’ did not tell us enough of an answer. Mai replies “Well because of all our learning we know how big TONNES and LOTS is. It was so much thinking, and now we know it is so, so, so, so very big”. What a satisfied response. I look to my Framework to include this journey in my transition document as Mai moves spaces and consider her learning within the outcomes. Most powerfully both I and the family see how Mai is growing in her competence as a communicator of learning and the skills developed in representing her ideas in many and complex ways.

2. Today at work I had a conversation with a mum where I really had to think about promoting learning and using the Framework Outcomes. Her child has not long started in the three year old room and she wanted to know if we did botany classes because one of her friend’s children was ‘taking botany’.

My first thought was ‘botany, botanic, that’s about plants right?’ I started to talk to the mum about all the experiences of botany her child may have in our environment. I was particularly thinking about the Outcome—Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

There are many different trees in our yard, in fact our rooms are named after native trees.

We look at leaf fall and tree roots and nuts and seeds all the time, we grow vegies and herbs and the children choose and label and track growth with measurements and diagrams. We eat what we can.

Often natural materials turn up in children’s construction and visual representations. Oh and we climb the trees, swing from their branches and measure ourselves against their bark.

See that piece of tree up there on the sink in a jar—we are trying to make it grow again after it was accidentally pulled from the ground by the children’s roadway. We are not sure if it will survive but we are going to try.

Last week we tried sticky tape to reattach some leaves, we are testing out a theory of whether brown and crispy leaves ever ‘come back to be living’.

If the children want to know, we explore the scientific name for things that grow in our space. We know about scientific names because of dinosaurs and insects.

So do we do botany?—sure planning for learning using the Framework Outcomes means you know about botany—we just don’t call it that.’

## FIND MORE ABOUT

- The Framework, pp.19–47
- *Reflect Respect Relate* provides a guide for examining the connection between educators’ relationships and practices and children’s wellbeing and involvement in learning. Learning outcomes are maximised when children’s intellectual capacities and dispositions are recognised, valued and extended
- Framework in Action, Stories 31 and 34

### *The Early Years Learning Framework*

*Principle 1: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships*

*Practice: Responsiveness to children*

*Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing*





## 12. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Active learning environment:** an active learning environment is one in which children are encouraged to explore and interact with the environment to make (or construct) meaning and knowledge through their experiences, social interactions and negotiations with others. In an active learning environment, educators play a crucial role of encouraging children to discover deeper meanings and make connections among ideas and between concepts, processes and representations. This requires educators to be engaged with children's emotions and thinking. *(Adapted from South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework, General Introduction, pp10 & 11).*

**Agency:** being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.

**Children:** refers to babies, toddlers and three to five year olds, unless otherwise stated.

**Co-construct:** learning takes place as children interact with educators and other children as they work together in partnership.

**Communities:** social or cultural groups or networks that share a common purpose, heritage, rights and responsibilities and/or other bonds. 'Communities' is used variously to refer, for example, to the community within early childhood settings, extended kinships, the local geographic community and broader Australian society.

**Critical reflection:** reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice.

**Curriculum:** in the early childhood setting curriculum means 'all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development'. [adapted from Te Whariki].

**Dispositions:** enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations, for example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence.

**Early childhood settings:** long day care, occasional care, family day care, Multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, creches, early intervention settings and similar services.

**Educators:** early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.

**Intentional teaching:** involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have 'always' been done that way.

**Involvement:** is a state of intense, whole hearted mental activity, characterised by sustained concentration and intrinsic motivation. Highly involved children (and adults) operate at the limit of their capacities, leading to changed ways of responding and understanding leading to deep level learning (adapted from Laevers, 1994).

Children's involvement can be recognised by their facial, vocal and emotional expressions, the energy, attention and care they apply and the creativity and complexity they bring to the situation. (Laevers) *A state of flow* Csikszentmihayli cited in *Reflect, Respect, Relate* (DECS 2008).

**Learning:** a natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.

**Learning framework:** a guide which provides general goals or outcomes for children's learning and how they might be attained. It also provides a scaffold to assist early childhood settings to develop their own, more detailed curriculum.

**Learning Outcome:** a skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families.

**Literacy:** in the early years literacy includes a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, story telling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and writing.

**Numeracy:** broadly includes understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting.

**Pedagogies:** practices that are intended to promote children's learning.

**Pedagogy:** early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

**Play-based learning:** A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

**Scaffold:** the educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.

**Spiritual:** refers to a range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder, and an exploration of *being* and knowing.

**Transitions:** the process of moving between home and childhood setting, between a range of different early childhood settings, or from childhood setting to full-time school.

**Wellbeing:** Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994). It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience.

**Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** is Vygotsky's term for describing the difference between what a child can achieve/learn independently and what a child can achieve/learn with guidance and assistance of adults or collaboration with more experienced, capable children. Learning in the ZPD depends upon relationships.

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## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Theoretical Perspective	Examples of Theorists	Key Ideas	Pedagogical Practices (teaching, learning and assessment)
Behaviourist theories	Skinner	<p>Behaviour is learned and can also be unlearned.</p> <p>Inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour can be replaced by appropriate/acceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Changes in children's behaviour occur because of the responses they get to their behaviour.</p>	<p>Educators reinforce appropriate/desired behaviour through rewards. Rewards can range from a positive statement about a child's behaviour to tangible rewards such as star charts.</p> <p>Educators avoid reinforcing inappropriate/undesirable behaviour. For example, they might ignore the behaviour if there are no direct or immediate dangers associated with the behaviour. Alternatively, they might remove children who are behaving inappropriately from situations that have triggered that behaviour.</p> <p>Educators develop a wide range of behaviour management strategies. They draw children's attention to the consequences of their behaviour. They also model appropriate behaviour and provide children with verbal and non-verbal cues to elicit desirable behaviour.</p> <p>Educators focus on observable and measurable aspects of children's behaviour.</p>



Theoretical Perspective	Examples of Theorists	Key Ideas	Pedagogical Practices (teaching, learning and assessment)
Developmental theories	Piaget Donaldson Bowlby	<p>Development depends on contexts and is the result of unique combinations of genetic and environmental circumstances.</p> <p>Developmental milestones are achieved in order for a child to be ready for learning and play. (Development leads learning.)</p> <p>Children learn through their exploration and play with concrete materials.</p> <p>Development is holistic. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains of development are interrelated and interwoven.</p> <p>Developmental theories recognise both consistency and variability in child development.</p> <p>Different theories of child development offer signposts to different ways for understanding young children.</p>	<p>Educators facilitate children’s learning by planning a rich environment with routines and play-based experiences appropriate for children’s unique and holistic development.</p> <p>Planned experiences may link to learning objectives (goals) in order to assist children achieve developmental expectations and milestones.</p> <p>Educators use observation of children in everyday activities to understand and interpret children’s development and individual differences.</p> <p>Observations may take many forms and from these diverse records, educators plan learning environments that support children’s learning.</p> <p>Interpretation of observation records is based on knowledge of developmental theory and research in order to draw inferences about children’s learning across developmental domains.</p>

Theoretical Perspective	Examples of Theorists	Key Ideas	Pedagogical Practices (teaching, learning and assessment)
Socio-cultural theories	Vygotsky Malaguzzi Rogoff Fleer	<p>Relationships and participation are central to learning.</p> <p>Children develop and learn in multiple ways that are socially and culturally approved and constructed.</p> <p>Children learn ways of being interdependent through their participation in everyday events and as members of different social groups.</p> <p>Children play ahead of their development (Learning leads development.)</p> <p>Children are active agents and contributors in the different social groups in which they participate.</p>	<p>Educators take into account the contexts for children's lives in their expectations, planned experiences, resources and materials and in routines such as meals and sleep arrangements.</p> <p>Scaffolds by other children or adults are provided to support children's learning. Scaffolds (for example questions, prompts, demonstrations) help children move through learning with assistance to learn new shared or independent understandings or skills.</p> <p>Educators use active and responsive listening in order to understand and respect children's learning.</p> <p>Children's diverse ways of learning and expressing that learning are documented in multiple forms in order to ensure those learnings are visible to others.</p> <p>Learning stories or narrative notes are used to provide context-rich and respectful accounts of children's learning, strengths and interests.</p> <p>Learning experiences connect with and extend children's ways of knowing, skills and understandings which they bring with them from home and community to the early childhood setting.</p>

Theoretical Perspective	Examples of Theorists	Key Ideas	Pedagogical Practices (teaching, learning and assessment)
Critical theories	Friere	<p>Children are born with rights, including the right to be consulted, heard and listened to in matters that affect them.</p> <p>Children have agency, which means they have the capacity to make decisions and choices about their learning.</p> <p>Social transformation is supported through education for a more just and equal world.</p>	<p>Families and children are co-participants with educators in negotiating, developing and implementing learning agendas, outcomes and assessment.</p> <p>Critical questions are used to support planning by exploring learning from the child's perspective:</p> <p>What is it like for me in this place?</p> <p>Do you listen to me?</p> <p>What does a good day look like for me?</p> <p>Different strategies are used to help children discuss their answers to these questions with educators (role play, photographic images, discussion, puppets).</p> <p>Educators adopt a critical enquiry approach to curriculum planning, evaluation and assessment.</p> <p>Pedagogies using a variety of strategies intentionally explore or challenge issues of inclusion, fairness or discrimination.</p>
Post-structuralist	Foucault MacNaughton Canella Grieshaber	<p>Children have complex and shifting identities as they move between and participate in different social groups.</p> <p>There are multiple and contested ways of knowing and learning.</p>	<p>Families and children are co-participants with educators in negotiating, developing and implementing learning agendas, outcomes and assessment.</p> <p>Critical questions are used to support planning by exploring learning from the child's perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is it like for me in this place?</li> <li>• Do you listen to me?</li> <li>• What does a good day look like for me?</li> </ul> <p>Different strategies are used to help children discuss their answers to these questions with educators (role play, photographic images, discussion, puppets).</p> <p>Educators adopt a critical enquiry approach to curriculum planning, evaluation and assessment.</p> <p>Pedagogies using a variety of strategies intentionally explore or challenge issues of inclusion, fairness or discrimination.</p>

(Adapted from *Waterfalls* and the Queensland Early Years Curriculum documents)

# 14. THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

## EDUCATORS' STORIES AND MODELS FOR PRACTICE

\*This document represents written and photographic reports from practitioners on their practice. In order to present their stories to you in authentic form photo quality may vary.

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***The Early Years***  
***Learning Framework***  
***In Action***

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**Educators' stories and models for practice**

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*\* This document represents written and photographic reports from practitioners on their practice. In order to present their stories to you in authentic form photo quality may vary.*

## What you will find

STORY	FOCUS	AGE GROUP	STORY NO.	PAGES
<b><i>Belonging, being and becoming – exploring the principles</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principles</li> <li>Values</li> <li>Beliefs</li> </ul>	<i>educators</i>	1	63 – 65
<b><i>Climbing mountains</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	2	66 – 67
<b><i>Dancing queen</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum decision making</li> <li>Relationships</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	3	68 – 69
<b><i>Discovering the washing</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsiveness</li> <li>Involved learners</li> <li>Children are connected with and contribute to their world</li> </ul>	<i>babies toddlers</i>	4	70 – 71
<b><i>Documenting Nick's learning</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belonging, being and becoming</li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	5	72 – 73
<b><i>Using non-standard units of measurement</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective communicators – numeracy</li> </ul>	<i>Preschool</i>	6	74
<b><i>Drawing and writing with Donna</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective communicators – literacy</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	7	75 – 76
<b><i>Aboriginal cultural studies</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural competence</li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	8	77 – 85
<b><i>Through the gate and off to school</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Continuity of learning and transitions</li> <li>Partnerships</li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	9	86 – 87
<b><i>Developing self help skills and transition between rooms in child care</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belonging, being and becoming</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Partnerships</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	10	88
<b><i>Kerry becomes a bilby girl</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuity of learning and transitions</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	11	89 – 90
<b><i>Piper moves to the groove</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuity of learning and transitions</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	12	91 – 92
<b><i>Using the Early Years Learning Framework to promote learning through music</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early years planning cycle</li> <li>Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>	<i>babies toddlers preschool educators</i>	13	93 – 102
<b><i>Supporting Allisa's Aboriginal identity</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural competence</li> <li>Partnerships</li> <li>Belonging, being and becoming</li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	14	103
<b><i>Long Day Care, Jack aged 2 years</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>	<i>toddlers educators</i>	15	104

<b>Learning Outcome: Children are confident and involved learners - using Kaurua language in early childhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural competence</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>	preschool educators	16	105 – 106
<b>Exploring levels of outcomes with Emily aged 17 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>	babies educators	17	107
<b>Two skyscrapers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communicators – numeracy</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Play</li> </ul>	preschool	18	108
<b>A most significant change story: Master Chef</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging, being and becoming</li> <li>• Relationships</li> </ul>	preschool	19	109 – 110
<b>Long day care, Amber aged 20 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing</li> <li>• High expectations and equity</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul>	babies	20	111
<b>Molly's magnificent machine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Learning environments</li> </ul>	preschool	21	112 – 113
<b>Planning for Madison's wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>	family day care toddlers educators	22	114
<b>Occasional Care, Isaac and Aaron aged 11 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Cultural competence</li> <li>• Belonging, being and becoming</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> </ul>	occasional care babies	23	115
<b>Peekaboo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Play</li> <li>• Strong sense of identity</li> </ul>	babies	24	116 – 117
<b>Pine cones and cumquats: Ruby's learning story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional teaching</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Effective communication - numeracy</li> </ul>	preschool	25	118 – 119
<b>Reflections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Relationships</li> </ul>	babies	26	120 – 121
<b>Shadow exploration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning environment</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Children are connected with and contribute to their world</li> </ul>	toddlers	27	122 – 123

<b>Leena's grandmother and the rainbow serpent story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Belonging, being and becoming</i></li> <li>• <i>Relationships</i></li> <li>• <i>Partnerships</i></li> <li>• <i>Strong sense of identity</i></li> </ul>	<i>toddlers</i>	28	124
<b>Tracks and connections: revealing talents through shared interests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Partnerships</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning environment</i></li> <li>• <i>Responsiveness</i></li> <li>• <i>Effective communication</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	29	125 – 126
<b>Travelling with Di</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Belonging, being and becoming</i></li> <li>• <i>Wellbeing</i></li> <li>• <i>Responsiveness</i></li> <li>• <i>Partnerships</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	30	127 – 129
<b>Early years planning cycle in practice – children are confident and involved learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Curriculum decision making</i></li> <li>• <i>Confident and involved learners</i></li> <li>• <i>Effective communication – numeracy</i></li> <li>• <i>Intentional teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Assessment</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	31	130 – 133
<b>Including Tahlia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>High expectations and equity</i></li> <li>• <i>Respect for diversity</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning environments</i></li> <li>• <i>Partnerships</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	32	134
<b>The garden and things you may find</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning environments</i></li> <li>• <i>Early years planning cycle</i></li> <li>• <i>Children are connected with and contribute to their world</i></li> <li>• <i>Partnerships</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	33	135 – 139
<b>The wonders of clay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Confident and involved learners</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning environments</i></li> <li>• <i>Secure relationships</i></li> </ul>	<i>babies toddlers</i>	34	140 – 142
<b>Veggie soup and chocolate cake</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Play</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning environment</i></li> <li>• <i>Wellbeing</i></li> <li>• <i>Confident and involved learners</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	35	143 – 144
<b>Garden project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Early years planning cycle</i></li> <li>• <i>Children are connected with and contribute to their world</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	36	145
<b>Welcome to the animal ark</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Effective communication</i></li> <li>• <i>Play</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning environment</i></li> </ul>	<i>preschool</i>	37	146 – 147



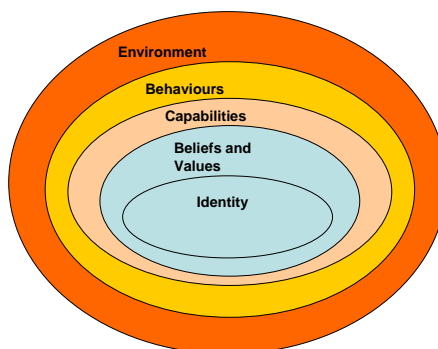
## Belonging, being and becoming - exploring the principles

As educators our ability to facilitate and create engaging learning environments and experiences for children and families is ultimately determined by our identity. If our teaching practice is to be changed or guided by the five key Principles that underpin ***Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Framework for Australia*** (2009), then we must first understand what values and beliefs drive our practice as an educator. The five Principles are:

1. *Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships*
2. *Partnerships*
3. *High expectations and equity*
4. *Respect for diversity*
5. *Ongoing learning and reflective practice*

The act of clarifying what drives the personal 'art of teaching' allows a space for educators to reflect and perhaps authentically adopt these five key Principles.

To achieve this clarification an activity based on the 'Neurological Levels' model, developed by Dilts (1995)<sup>1</sup>, was used with a group of 25 early childhood educators to explore their core teaching values and beliefs. The intention of the activity was to provide a tool that could assist with thinking about how to make personal change (if identified as needed) when adopting the five Principles.



Neurological Levels, (Dilts 1995)

The positive feedback by participants in the workshop was overwhelming. Each educator in the group identified their core belief and reflected how it shaped and influenced their teaching practice (see following activity sheet and notes).

Examples of beliefs:

- Learning is enhanced with FUN! (non threatening environment).
- Self worth is crucial in optimum learning.
- All parents want the best for their child.
- You need to nurture the whole child and family.
- Children learn best when they see themselves as learners and are supported to take risks with their learning.
- Happiness is the underlying core of every successful learner.
- You need to love being with children.

<sup>1</sup> Dilts, R. (1995) *Strategies of Genius*, Vol.1, META Publications, CA

## **Supporting notes for the activity** ***The Robert Dilts Neurological Levels Model***

### **Environment – where and when**

- Heavily influenced by all other levels.
- Your beliefs and values influence the environment you create for families and children.

### **Behaviours – the what**

- What you do and what you say.
- Specific, conscious actions – includes our thoughts.
- All behaviour is designed to achieve a purpose, sometimes we are not clear about what the purpose is.
- Relatively easy to learn, often through role modelling.
- When we want to change, the change is often identified at this level but hard to do because it is closely connected to other neurological levels.

### **Capabilities – the how**

- How you apply knowledge and behaviour to achieve a goal.
- Capabilities are influenced by all the levels internal to it.
- Level of skill – behaviour practised over and over again becomes consistent and often habitual.
- What are the capabilities I need to generate the desired environment?
- What skills do I have that support the environment?

### **Beliefs and values – the why**

- Beliefs and values direct our lives to a great extent.
- Values – what is important to us – some values change over time according to life situations.
- Beliefs support and reinforce your values – the glue that holds them together.
- They are permission givers and prohibitors.
- If you don't value or believe something, you won't develop the motivation to change.
- Beliefs have little to do with any reality other than your own. Our senses are very good at filtering out information that contradicts a belief and finding information that supports your belief.
- Whatever you believe is true for you – when you change a belief, you change a result.
- Beliefs can change with experience – the critical elements in developing confidences are beliefs and identity.
- Confidence plays an important role in acquisition of skills. When your identity and beliefs support each other positively, you will be in a more confident state to learn and develop capabilities.
- Why don't people want to change? Identity and beliefs hold them there.
- Question your values and beliefs now and again – are they enabling you to be flexible, capable and successful?

### **Identity – the who**

- How you think about yourself shapes you.
- "I'm just not that sort of person" identity statement.
- Sense of self – defines your core beliefs defines who you are – your mission in life.
- Identity is very resilient, and you can develop and change it.
- I am an... educator.

## Values and beliefs drive behaviour

An effective educator might be said to be one who can create and maintain an environment where families and children ....

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The first step in this process might be to have a 'vision' of what that environment would be like. Work through the levels of learning, communication and change. What is your vision and what thinking patterns and behaviours will help you create and maintain your vision for your programs?

**What type of environment (physical, social, emotional) do I want to create for children and families?**

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Once we've described the environment, then we can ask:

**What behaviour(s) must I demonstrate, consistently, to generate and maintain such an environment?**

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**What capabilities must I have in order to be able consistently to generate consistent behaviours?**

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**What beliefs would enable me to generate and maintain the required capabilities?**

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**What identity generates the beliefs? (Who do I have to be?)**

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**How will my creation of this environment (through my leadership) benefit the greater good?**

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# Climbing mountains



“Uuuuhhh” said Phoebe as she lifted herself on all fours onto the plank. Phoebe stopped and then slowly stood up using no hands keeping her arms out for extra balance.

Phoebe slowly shuffled up to the highest point of the plank much like standing on the peak of a mountain, looking down below!

Standing at the edge, Phoebe waited very patiently for James to climb out of the way.

Once complete Phoebe continued on her way and looked down into the depths of the hole below!

This didn't stop Phoebe as she crouched down and climbed into the hole sideways.

Sara then shuffled up to the edge towards Phoebe who provided a giggle to Sara who waved excitedly and expressed a “hello”.

Phoebe used her knees to push herself back onto the plank and the guidance of hanging poles to then follow Sara to the end and with a hop back onto flat ground Phoebe's climbing journey was complete!





### **Analysis of learning**

Phoebe used great concentration to maintain balance while on the plank. She gained extra balance by slowly standing and placing her arms out. As Phoebe overcome the problem she slowly built her confidence up to then shuffle forward up the top of the plank and gain coordination. Phoebe looked down into the depths of the hole below and looked confident in her facial expressions to turn around and crouch down and climb inside.

Taking risks is important for learning as it opens up new and rewarding experiences.

Phoebe was also comfortable to share the learning opportunity and space with Sara as she provided a giggle and smile to Phoebe who responded with a wave and “hello” communicating openly with her.

### **What next**

To provide support during times where Phoebe is taking risks to then build further confidence by talking through the process and providing comfort.

Foster Phoebe’s curiosity with climbing by creating a range of resources to climb with an assortment of levels.

Provide opportunities of stimulation and challenge by going for adventures out to the large yard and also using morning times to attempt a range of climbing frames and gross motor activities.

**In this story there is evidence of the educator gathering and analysing information about what Phoebe can do and understand. She has used this information in the ongoing cycle of planning, documenting, reviewing and assessing children’s learning.**



# Dancing Queen

It was a very unusually wet, cold spring morning. We couldn't go outside so instead I set up some dancing on the veranda. On the stage I put out some bells and maracas.

I was inside with a few children in the home corner when out of the corner of my eye I noticed Halima walking over to the stage. She took two bells from the basket and began shaking them to the music.

Amish was standing on the stage as well and had noticed that Halima was dancing so he made his way over to the basket and took out some bells as well and began shaking them to the music. I could see that both Halima and Amish had big smiles on their face as they were dancing with each other.

After a while Halima began stamping her feet and jumping to the music, once again with a big smile on her face. I could see how much fun she was having so I found a set of bells and started shaking them in time with the music and dancing with Halima.



### **Analysis of learning**

Halima demonstrates that she is starting to feel a sense of belonging and comfort in her new environment and is also forming and maintaining relationships with the staff and peers within the room. I have noticed, that since beginning, Halima has a big interest in music and dance and in this learning experience she is responding to and creating rhythm and dance both individually and in a group setting.

### **What next**

We will continue to encourage Halima's interest in dance and music by introducing different cultural music such as African, Aboriginal, Latin etc. and adding different resources for her to use during her dance such as streamers, home made musical instruments, drums etc. I will also continue to spend some time one-to-one reading stories, singing songs etc. with Halima as we continue to build our secure attachment.



**In what ways have the educators considered the Principles, and Outcomes of the Framework to support Halima's Belonging Being and Becoming?**

**In this story the educator referred to the weather as a motivator for the learning experience. What do you see as appropriate motivators/sources of curriculum and learning opportunities?**

**How do spontaneous teachable moments sit in outcomes based learning?**

**In your setting what would be the balance between child-led, child-initiated and educator supported learning?**

**In what ways is this learning story an example of co-construction?**

# Discovering the washing



Katie approached Amy who was diligently folding the washing.

“Roar” shouted Katie as Amy pointed to the picture on the bib. Katie then bent down and picked up a bib from the basket. She then spread it out and smoothed it by using her hands against Amy’s leg. As she presented another bib Katie then pointed at the flower on the front and Amy replied “leaf”. “Eaf” explained Katie, smiling.

She ran her fingers up and down the stitching as Amy told a story to explain that the big flower was watering the smaller one.

Amy collated more bibs onto her leg, making sure they were smoothed and spread evenly. When the basket was empty Katie shrugged her shoulders and explained “gone” looking quite puzzled.

To extend further, Amy decided to open the cupboard and collect the basket to place the clean bibs into. “Uhhh” sounded Katie as she lifted and dropped the bibs into the basket.

Katie then lifted the basket directly towards the opened cupboard and confidently walked with it in her hands.

Amy assisted Katie to finish by lifting the basket into the cupboard.

Katie then pushed the door closed, wiped her hands and clapped to celebrate, as much to explain “job well done”.





### Analysis of learning

Katie explored language and sound during this story, as she expressed “roar” to signify a lion on the front of a bib, “eaf” to signify a leaf and “uh” to express exertion. She also appeared to be able to connect a symbol or picture with a sound or word and connected with Amy as she used repetition to enhance this. Katie also used gestures by pointing and shrugging her shoulders to express and communicate with Amy.

Katie also expressed confidence with the process of collating the bibs, spreading them out on Amy’s knee, placing them in the basket, independently taking it to the cupboard and closing the door. To be able to take risks is important for learning as it opens up new and rewarding learning experiences and increases security to take action and that it is ok to seek help when needed and make mistakes.

### What next

Provide opportunities for Katie to participate and make choices during routine times and her day. This could be by opening up the cupboard for Katie to choose activities while re-setting the room, giving her bibs and cups, wiping her own face and washing hands.

Provide books with photographs and words, and interactive displays for Katie to connect objects with words and sounds. Also model this for Katie and share one-on-one opportunities exploring literacy also through puppets, songs and sound repetition.

Determine how Katie participates with routines at home.

### Linking to the Framework - Outcome 1: children have a strong sense of identity

In this example you can see how Amy has promoted Katie’s learning by:

- initiating interactions during a daily routine
- building on the knowledge and understandings that Katie already has
- responding sensitively to Katie’s initiation and interactions; and
- spending time interacting and conversing with Katie.

## Documenting Nick's learning

### Context

Our kindergarten is a stand alone preschool that offers two sessions per day with two qualified early childhood teachers. There are 18 cultural groups represented in the group and bilingual support is an integral part of the preschool. Nick's parents live apart. His mother has a new partner and Nick currently spends time with both his mother and father. His mother reports that they have inconsistent child rearing practices and his mother has related that his father plays boisterous games with him.

### Nick's early kindergarten experiences

Nick was a boy with well developed language skills. He found interacting with other children and adults and developing relationships quite challenging. He engaged in a great deal of running outside and had difficulty starting activities and rarely finished anything he started. He was often frustrated, unfocused and easily distracted and had difficulty engaging. He didn't like joining small formal groups such as story and songs and would either hide under the table or run outside.

### Planning for Nick

After many observations and discussion we realised that Nick was looking for consistency, a sense of security and waiting for someone to define his behaviour and set some boundaries for him. We developed some simple strategies: stop and listen to us instead of running away; letting him know that hiding under the table was not appropriate at this time; and expecting him to join formal groups for a short time. Because of his well developed language skills and comprehension he was able to engage in conversations and negotiate with us about setting boundaries. We discussed our strategies with his mother and she was very supportive.

### Nick's play

One morning we observed Nick in the home corner playing with a baby doll. He was very caring and nurturing. As he cradled the doll and walked around he was telling the other children to "be quiet, shhh, shhh, the baby needs to sleep". This play continued for several days and then Nick encountered a big problem. *How could he join other activities and still care for his baby?* We talked with him about this problem and together looked at different possibilities. We talked about how families from African nations come in with babies strapped to their back. This intrigued Nick and he thought if we found some fabric we could strap his 'baby' on his back. This was an excellent solution and he engaged in the process of helping us secure the doll to his back.

Each day with his 'baby' securely tied to his back he became involved in activities with the other children including digging in the digging patch. His 'baby' became the link Nick needed to gain a sense of belonging and connect with his peers. He joined small formal groups and at times left his 'baby' sleeping in one of the prams but would go back and check regularly to see that all was well with his 'baby'.

### The play continues

Nick's connection to the doll continues and he returns each day to his 'baby' as he moves through various dramatic play scenarios, such as taking his 'baby' to a birthday party. While he is often wanting to control the play he is engaging in purposeful play and forming new friendships. Through his play he is displaying more nurturing behaviours in both his play and friendships. The doll seems to have strengthened Nick's wellbeing, giving him strength and maybe a reason to better regulate his behaviour and emotions. It seems to have encouraged him to be more caring and more responsible for his actions.



### Outcomes

We were very surprised as we thought changes in his behaviour would take much longer. We feel very pleased that we had found a way to support his wellbeing and that using play and in particular dramatic play as a key strategy has been very positive and enabled Nick to take responsibility for who he is and how he engages with others. Nick is more cooperative, engaged and is developing new friendships daily. While he still has difficulty entering groups we believe that as his confidence in developing relationships grows, this will become less of a difficulty for him.

### **The vision**

Nick's play over many days demonstrates that he is experiencing for himself 'the significant adult in his life'. Through his play he is being the significant adult for his 'baby' (the doll). By taking on this role he is experiencing a close nurturing relationship that is engaging him in a range of positive actions and emotions. These experiences give him feelings of wellbeing that will form the basis for future successful life relationships.

### **Belonging**

Nick has a sense of belonging to his family and the centre and has comfortable relationships with the people in these settings. His play with his 'baby' supports his belonging in the centre as well as creating opportunities to enter small groups. There is a new sense of purpose for everything he does.

### **Being**

Nick knows the present and has an understanding of the events of his life. He knows how he feels and his 'baby' is a positive way forward in moving between his everyday reality and imagined reality which is an important component of his wellbeing.

### **Becoming**

Through his 'baby' Nick is learning how to participate positively with his peers. What an amazing strategy he has developed and enacted.

### **Educators' practice**

- carefully observing, analysing his behaviour and interactions
- working with his mother to develop strategies to strengthen his wellbeing and involvement
- the provision of an active learning environment that allows Nick to make choices
- acknowledging that the doll was his 'baby', an important transitional object for his play and wellbeing
- accepting his play and acknowledging his rights

### **What next**

As a staff team we are not sure what will happen next – we will:

- observe Nick's play, relationships and involvement
- believe in Nick's abilities
- continue to connect with Nick's family
- follow Nick's direction and trust in Nick's choices

### **We plan to**

- build his confidence in risk taking and developing friendship groups

### **What role(s) did the educators adopt in supporting Nick's learning through play?**

The educators were able to accommodate Nick's need for the baby in his play across the learning environment. In what ways does your site provide an integrated learning environment rather than segregated learning areas? How might an integrated play environment support children's developing sense of wellbeing?

If we describe a child as 'strong willed', what does this reveal about how we view and relate to the child? What effect might this have on a child's developing sense of identity?

How did the educators need to review their perceptions of Nick when he demonstrated caring and nurturing behaviours rather than angry and difficult behaviours?

In what way did the educators' work in partnership with the family contribute to Nick's sense of wellbeing?

## Using Non-standard Units of Measurement

Today we gave the children the opportunity to measure shapes with some non standard units of measurement – pebbles, seed pods, shells and dried beans. The children enjoyed chatting to each other about how many of the resources were needed to go around the perimeter of each shape. Once they had measured with one of the resources they would choose another and compare their results. The children were encouraged to record their findings and they did this by writing down the number of shells, pebbles etc they had used and then they drew the shape they had measured. It was interesting to note that they then started to form patterns around the perimeters of the shapes using the pebbles, pods, shells and beans. Louis and Chris went out into the garden and found sticks and rosemary twigs and they used these to measure around the shapes showing that they had an understanding of the fact that many things can be used to measure. The children also noticed that more small objects and less large objects were required to measure the perimeter of a given shape.



**In what ways have educators worked towards Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners?**

**In what ways is this learning story an example of co-construction?**

# Drawing and writing with Donna



Today Donna was at the drawing table doing a big black drawing. She was doing big, fast, vigorous movements with her pencil.

“It’s finished now” she said as she folded/scrunched up her paper and put it in a bowl with her other drawings.

“I’m going to write your name” she said to me as she placed a new white piece of paper in front of her. “Ok, you show me” I said.



Donna drew some little squiggles that went from right to left that looked very much like writing. “That says Chloe” Donna said as she pointed to her squiggle.

“Can you write your name?” I asked Donna. “Yep” Donna said as she drew another small squiggle on the page. “What about Lauren?” I asked. Donna drew another squiggle on the page and pointed at it and said “That says Lauren.”



Pete was sitting next to me at the table, Donna leaned in to talk to him, put on her most friendly voice and said “You want me to write your name Pete?” Pete gave a nod and Donna drew another squiggle on her page and said “See, that says Pete!”

Donna decided that her page had enough writing on it so she scrunched up the piece of paper and began to start drawing on a new one.

### **Analysis of learning**

Donna spends a lot of time at the drawing table, sitting, drawing and chatting with her friends. She is recognising that text has meaning eg. 'this says Lauren.'

Donna's writing looks distinctively different than her drawings. Her writing consisted of small squiggles—very similar in size and shape to the writing we see in books and in everyday notes etc.



### **What next**

We will support Donna's interest in drawing and writing by providing opportunities for her to experiment with different mediums and tools. We will draw and write alongside her and practise drawing different shapes together.

We will also practise recognising different letters and numbers that are written in books and around the room and we will practise copying the shapes.

### **Linking to the Framework Outcomes**

#### **Outcome 5: children are effective communicators**

**In this example we can see Donna beginning to use approximations to convey meaning.**

**The educator is promoting her learning by providing resources that encourage Donna to experiment with print and by constructing writing with her.**

# Aboriginal cultural studies in kindergarten

## Aboriginal cultural studies pilot project 2009 the context

- Preschools were invited to participate in a trial project aimed at developing processes to support increased educator confidence in delivering Aboriginal Cultural Studies as part of the preschool curriculum.
- The trial project aimed to develop processes that value and use the expertise of Aboriginal people in local communities
- Educators explored Aboriginal Cultural Studies through contemporary and traditional literature, music, dance, drama, technology, excursions, accessing references and talking with local community members to explore the past and present and engage in reconciliation processes
- In supporting an understanding of Aboriginal Culture and its significant contribution to the past present and future of Australia the project supports the Vision, Principles, Practices and Outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework and in particular making a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

## Developing cultural competence in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

- Where we started...
  - Staff had different levels of understanding about Aboriginal culture.
  - We had five families who identified as Aboriginal.
  - Centre had a number of murals painted in previous years by local Aboriginal artist and children on display.

## Aboriginal art at the centre





continued...

- Centre had some books, puzzles, posters and songs depicting Aboriginal people, art - both traditional and contemporary – and Dreaming stories
- Aboriginal dolls
- Limited artefacts
- DVD of Dreaming stories

How can we include Aboriginal perspectives into our centre?

- Centre purchased two copies of *'The Little Red Yellow Black Book'* so that all staff have an introduction into Indigenous Australia.
- We sent a letter to our Aboriginal families inviting them to come in and chat about their culture and discuss what they felt was important for us to teach and share with others.

## Aboriginal language

- We displayed a Kurna acknowledgement on the front door in both English and Kurna for all families to see.
- Talked with the children about the land our kindy is situated on and how it may have looked when only Aboriginal people lived here.

## Involving the children

- Taught songs using Kurna language.
- Visited the Living Kurna cultural centre with the children and families.
  - Took the bush tucker walk
  - Participated in singing and dancing (traditional)
  - Looked at art works and artefacts

## Preparing the ground



## Involving families and community

- Invited a parent to come in and play his didgeridoo and guitar with the children.



## Living Kurna Cultural Centre



## Involving the children

- Art activities set up to show traditional painting styles.
- Viewed Dreaming stories with the children and discussed the meaning.
- Redeveloped a section of our yard using only plants indigenous to the area.

## Involving families and community

- Worked with Raylene, Marra Dreaming, on traditional painting techniques.
- Invited Aunty Sheree, a local Kurna elder, to come and share a Dreaming story and songs in Kurna language.



## Things in progress...

- Working with Marra Dreaming to design and paint a mural with the children depicting the coming together of many cultures to Kurna land.
- This mural will also incorporate the word 'welcome' in the many languages that make up our community.



## Things in progress

- Have asked an Aboriginal family to help us to develop a character for our doll.
- Unpacking the Kurna welcome with the children.
- Use every day at the centre.

## Our future plans

- Invite member of the local community to unveil our new mural and indigenous garden.
- Build a traditional 'wiltja' (shelter) in our indigenous garden.
- Contact ARMSU for support/mentoring.
- Visit the Aboriginal resource unit.
- Purchase artefacts to be used in the centre.

## Questions we have...

- How can we lobby for more Aboriginal workers to be employed?
- Any suggestions for getting Indigenous families more involved at the centre?
- Where can we purchase an older looking Aboriginal doll?
- Where can we purchase items such as coolamons?



## **Through the gate and off to school**

### *Relationships and connections at points of transition*

Effective partnerships and positive relationships between families and educators are strongly linked to learning outcomes and smooth transitions from one setting to another. Transition to school can be a significant event in the life of a child and it is widely acknowledged that a positive transition to school has a strong correlation to ongoing achievement and engagement. Another key to smooth transitions from one setting to another is the strength of the relationships and connections between educators across settings.

Our kindergarten is co-located with a junior primary school in a low socio-economic, culturally diverse community. Both settings have strong connections with many of the families supported by a range of communication practices and site-based events. Until recently, despite our close physical proximity, we have had limited professional contact with our colleagues in the junior primary school. The transition program consisted of three visits in consecutive weeks on a designated day in the term before children started school. This practice had been in place for a number of years. Parents received an information booklet from the school printed in four different languages detailing various policies and procedures. We came to realise, over time, through comments from children and families and social connections with teachers in the school that the 'starting school' experience was not working for a number of children and that some teachers felt that children were 'not ready.'

The opportunity to participate in an inquiry project enabled us to collaborate with teachers from the school in a network to critically reflect on our transition practices and their impact on children. The focus of our inquiry was 'How can we better support the transition of children from preschool to school?' focussing particularly on involvement, wellbeing and children's voice. Over the course of the year we extended the periods of transition with flexibility for individuals and small groups of children. Children from the preschool visited the school at a range of times, in small groups, and for a range of activities over an extended period. Children who had recently started school visited the kindergarten and participated in projects and continuing play scenarios. The children were always accompanied by a teacher. They were involved in conversations about the experience of transition..... the process, their expectations, challenges and highlights. Relationships were strengthened between educators and with children. Shared understandings were developed about early years pedagogy, the importance of play, the competence of children and the importance of the learning environment.

Through our observations and conversations and the insights of the children, it was clear that continuity in the learning environment was critical. We as educators needed to make sure that we adapted and changed the learning environment to meet what we believed was 'best practice' in teaching and learning for young children, rather than expecting the children to do all the adapting and changing. Adapt and change it did.

Not only had we found a way to open the gate but indeed that it would open each way. The practices have been sustained over time, ensuring that 'transition' is an ongoing process that continues over time, not just an event.

There is always more to do, however! As one child moved to the school her mother said to me 'She knows all about going to school but what about me?'

**In what ways do the educator's transition strategies reflect the principles and practices of the Framework?**

**In what ways does this story demonstrate intentional teaching?**

**What information collected by the educators would contribute to assessment for learning?**



## Four transition stories

In the following four stories we can see evidence of educators supporting Sienna's, Taj's, Kerry's and Piper's *belonging, being and becoming* as they make transitions.

The educators have taken an active role to help them manage the change and to feel comfortable and confident in their settings.

## Developing self help skills and transition between rooms in child care

### Sienna

Over several months staff worked with Sienna to develop the self help skills she needed to increase her independence and self confidence. The other thing that was happening in Sienna's life was she was moving from a room for babies to a room of toddlers.

The process occurred over time with staff encouraging Sienna to wash her hands in the bathroom rather than with a flannel at the table with the other babies. With encouragement Sienna learnt to do many things independently.



### Taj

Taj's family is Sudanese. As a newborn his mother carried him close to her body using a large piece of material. His older sister helped out at home by carrying Taj everywhere. When Taj began in child care he suddenly found he had to share adults with other babies. The settling process was difficult for Taj as he made sense on how the world had changed for him. Using the Circle of Security model his primary care giver took the following steps over a six month settling period to help him feel secure in his new environment.

At first Taj was held all the time and then eventually his caregiver sat alongside him, moving away bit by bit. When he went to sleep or drank his bottle Taj was wrapped, as he had been at home and rocked until he slept. With persistence and Taj's growing awareness that his primary caregiver was close by, Taj has gradually developed a secure base and happily looks for his caregiver while engaging in the business of exploring the play environment.

## Kerry becomes a Bilby Girl

At the end of the day today when we had all come inside, Kerry began her usual routine of grabbing a book from the bookshelf, making herself a comfy spot on the mattress and reading to herself.

I'd had a few requests to read '*The Terrible Plop*' and so I invited Kerry to come join us and listen to me read a story.

Kerry smiled, got up from her spot on the mattress and plonked herself onto my lap.

We read '*The Terrible Plop*' and the children enjoyed the story so much we read it again—this time stopping to look and talk about all of the different characters.

Kerry was able to identify all of the characters and tell me what they were doing and why. She showed me that she understood the story and the characters and events within it.

It was a lovely way to spend the last few moments of the day before Dad came to pick Kerry up.



### **Analysis of learning**

Kerry is settling into the Bilby Room and developing her trust with this new environment and the caregivers within it. From the moment Kerry came into the Bilby Room she immediately sought comfort in the book corner and the special moments that can be found from reading books.

Kerry's confidence in the Bilby Room is developing – Kerry is feeling comfortable and safe enough to talk, engage in conversations, accept invitations to play and to express her thoughts and ideas, which is lovely to see.



### **What next?**

I will support Kerry to continue to develop her confidence by responding to her cues and inviting her to join in on small group experiences such as sharing stories. It's important that Kerry feels safe and valued so that she has the confidence to participate in rich verbal interactions throughout the day.

# Piper moves to the groove!

Today was Piper's second 'official' day as a big Bilby girl. She was a bit hesitant to say goodbye to Dad in the morning but we went and looked at the birds in the tree outside and this seemed to make it a bit easier for her.

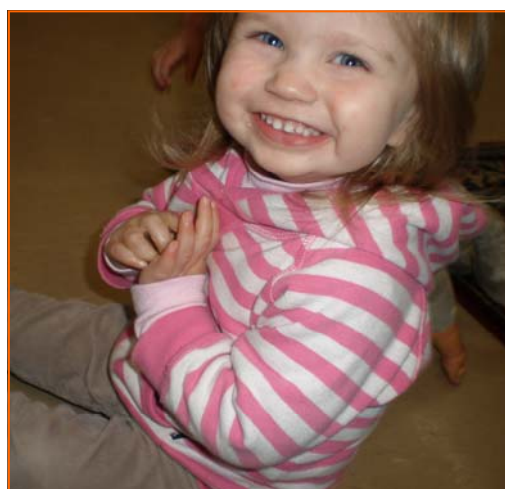
We had fun together in the morning looking at the birds, looking at helicopters and kicking and throwing the balls together.

Later in the morning I was inside dancing to the Wiggles with Tahlia and Isabel. I saw Piper come inside and watch us from the doorway—she was bopping up and down to the music on the spot.

I gave her a big smile and called her over to us. She gave me a little smile and came over. At first she stood on the carpet just smiling and watching. Then she started to swing her arms a little bit. Then she started to wiggle her hips, jump up and down, and wave her arms around—she was dancing!

She was having so much fun, she sat down and clapped in between each song (apparently the done thing).

She smiled and laughed along with Isabel and Tahlia as they jumped up and down together and pretended to fall over.





### **Analysis of learning**

Piper is developing her trust in the environment and caregivers of the Bilby Room. She is beginning to really 'come out of her shell' by taking risks and engaging in experiences with new children and her new caregivers. By having lots of visits and her good friend Amanda at hand, Piper has been able to take in and explore the Bilby Room bit by bit.

It's been wonderful watching Piper's confidence develop in her new environment and to see her laughing, giggling and having fun!



### **What next**

I will continue to support Piper to feel safe and valued in her new room by being responsive to her cues throughout the day. I'll be there for lots of cuddles and fun interactions throughout the day and I'll give gentle encouragements to support Piper to engage in new and exciting experiences.

Welcome to the Bilby Room Piper, I look forward to lots of fun times ahead!

# Using the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to promote learning through music



Children's interest was sparked by the centre's musician....



## Babies created their own experiments about sound



## It started with some nappy boxes...



Niamh (17 months) working on her idea that different boxes generate different sounds, which came from some music sessions devised by the Centre's music teacher, Wendy. Even though Niamh didn't attend those sessions, she has seen the other children exploring the idea.



Veronica (17 months) joins Niamh in her experiment, and together they share ideas and experiences.



### EYLF:

Children use feedback from themselves and others revise and build on an idea.

### RESEARCH

The involved person finds him/herself in a particular state characterised by concentration, intense experience, intrinsic motivation, a flow of energy and a high level of satisfaction connected with the fulfilment of the exploratory drive. (Laevers, 1994)







**Are the ideas still the same even if the tools are not?**

To challenge their thinking we introduced them to the big bass drum.

**EYLF:**  
Children make connections between experiences, concepts and processes  
They transfer knowledge from one experience to another



**BELONGING RESEARCH**  
The degree of well-being shows us how much the educational environment succeeds in helping children to feel at home, to be oneself, to remain in touch with oneself and have his or her emotional needs (the need for attention, recognition, competence.....) fulfilled. (Laevers, 1994)



Niamh and Veronica asked to explore the big bass drum over the next few days. On one occasion, a set of balls were also available in the environment and this is what happened.



**EYLF:**  
Children use play to investigate, project and try out ideas.

Niamh and Veronica threw a variety of balls onto the bass drum and laughed at the different sounds they made. They became particularly excited if the sound was loud and deep.

**EYLF:**  
Children use their sensory capabilities and dispositions with increasing integration, skill and purpose to explore and respond to their world



**EYLF:**  
Children manipulate objects and experiment with cause and effect, trial and error



Then to their surprise, when they threw the triangular, orange ball onto the bass drum, while the other balls were still on it, all the other balls bounced into the air and some bounced off the drum landing on the floor. Initially there was silence, which was soon followed by high levels of excited utterances, eye contact and laughter. All the balls were placed back on the bass drum and the triangular ball was once again dropped from a standing position. The same result occurred.

**WE NOW HAD A NEW  
EXPERIMENT – WHERE  
WILL IT LEAD US?**

## The exploration of guitars and their function in the Toddler Room

Through discussion with Oliver's Mum, we were able to gather some information about Oliver's interest in guitars. I found out that he has a ukulele at home which he regularly plays and sings to.

One morning in the Toddler courtyard I observed Oliver (aged 2) manoeuvre and place a large green building block and place it on top of the plank. He then got a red one and placed it onto the red mat below to sit on.



**Kylie:** Oliver, That looks interesting with the block and the plank. I wonder what's happening?

**Oliver:** 'It my guitar' as he placed his right arm over the top and began strumming and singing a medley of 'Twinkle Twinkle and Baa Baa Black Sheep'.

*EYLF: Children use [symbolic] play to investigate, project and explore ideas*



The very next morning Oliver revisited his learning by setting up the environment in the same way as the previous day. This time however, Zara joined him. Together, without speaking or verbal prompts, they arranged the environment to satisfy their needs.

**Reflect, Respect, Relate:**

*In an active learning environment, relationships are formed where reciprocal interactions and collaboration between educators and children lead to new understanding, knowledge and a deeper level of involvement. This requires educators to establish an environment and opportunities to be engaged with children's understandings, emotions and thinking.*

Once they were satisfied with their efforts, I decided to find out more.

**Kylie:** I can see that you have been very busy here. Zara (aged 2) and Oliver, can you tell me what you are doing with your blocks?

**Zara:** 'They are guitars.'

**Oliver:** 'Playing our guitars' as he began strumming just like he did the previous day.



In an attempt to find out more about what they knew I added 'Oh you are strumming' the guitar.

Oliver looked at me puzzled by the term I had used. I explained the term to which he repeated the word 'strumming'.

Zara then also joined the conversation turning to Oliver saying, 'I strumming too!'

Both continued to strum and Zara began to sing 'Twinkle, Twinkle' and 'Baa, Baa Black Sheep'. Once they had finished singing they looked at each other, smiled and then started to sing again, this time with Oliver leading the sing-a-long.

This highlighted to me not only the relationship between the two, especially the ease with which they were able to silently work together towards a common goal, but also that there were more learning opportunities which would challenge and extend their knowledge and thinking about guitars.

With help from my colleague, we used the Centre's real guitar at our next group time with the idea of offering the children real musical experiences and practice. We demonstrated a variety of techniques when using the guitar including how to hold the guitar, how to strum the guitar and labelled the various parts of the guitar. Many of the children recognised that the instrument was a guitar and showed some understanding on how to play it.



**Reflect, Respect, Relate:**

*The relationships we build and the style of our interactions with young children are critical to their present and future wellbeing, to their learning, their development and their social competence. Children learn about themselves and their worlds through relationships and experiences.*

Oliver reached for the strings and ran his hand down them, making them vibrate so that they made a sound. To Oliver's surprise the sound was louder than the sound he produces on the ukulele, so he repeated the action. When confident that the level of sound was consistent he then moved his hand faster up and down the strings. Once satisfied with this experience he asked Pam for the guitar, which he held with confidence using one hand in a clenched fist to tap.



*The involved person finds him/herself in a particular state characterised by concentration, intense experience, intrinsic motivation, a flow of energy and a high level of satisfaction connected with the fulfilment of the exploratory drive. (Laevers, 1994)*



It was then Zara's turn to explore the guitar. Her curiosity supported her to strum the guitar, but preferred to have it on the floor in front of her rather than on her lap. She preferred to use an open hand to tap the guitar saying 'Its Loud'.



We also enlisted the support of the centre's music teacher who is a proficient guitar player. The sound produced by the guitar was quite different!

She also accompanied this with songs that the children knew including 'Twinkle Twinkle' and 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' for Oliver and Zara.

Even though this experience is ongoing, Zara and Oliver are now able to point out various parts of the guitar including the strings and neck. Oliver has also shown keen interest in holding the guitar with one hand underneath the neck and one arm over the body. Both continue to enjoy playing the guitar and singing loudly.



## Making music in the Kindergarten Room



To engage children in more musical experiences we set up a specific music area with the aim of allowing the children to access, experiment and explore a variety of musical instruments.

We designed a tool to monitor and limit the number of children in the music area, to avoid overcrowding and sensory overload. The children were able to use this independently with a strong sense of ownership, and responsibility.

**RESPECT REFLECT RELATE:** In an active learning environment, relationships are formed where reciprocal interactions and collaboration between educators and children lead to new understanding, knowledge and deeper level of involvement. This requires educators to establish an environment and opportunities to be engaged with children's understandings, emotions and thinking.

A series of photographs, displaying visual instructions on the way to hold and play various instruments, was laid out on the bookshelf. Each photograph was also accompanied by written instructions, as well as the name of the particular instrument. A sign *handle with care* was displayed in red writing and was followed by many experiences and group brainstorms about what *handle with care* looked like.



**EYLF: Children demonstrate an increasing knowledge of and respect for natural and constructed environments.**

Initial music sessions focussed on identifying and labelling individual instruments. At this stage many children identified the castanets as 'clackers', the maracas as 'shakers' and the finger cymbals as 'bells'. The children were observed using the stick of the triangle and the tapping sticks to play the bongo drums, one child was observed banging the maracas together, while another used the tambourine as a drum. A child experimented with the maracas on different surfaces, tapping them on the floor, on the wooden shelf and on the brick wall, exclaiming "this sounds funny". We then included explicit instructions about how to hold and use the individual instruments correctly. We talked about the 'skins' on the bongo drums and the tambourine, and how important it is to use our hands only. We practised using different parts of our hands and experimented with the many different sounds each instrument could make.

What were the responses here and what did they already know to compare to the end?

During this learning process there were casualties along the way. Nathan, one of our new children to the Kindergarten was heard to say 'Oh no, it's broken' while playing with the large tambourine. Much to our surprise, he had squeezed his body through the hole and was attempting to use it as a hula hoop. Nathan's response was so honest "I'm sorry, it was an accident, I think I am too big". The children were aghast with shock, "You broke it Nathan, you have to be careful".



**EYLF: Children use play to investigate, project and explore new ideas**

## EYLF: Children engage in and contribute to shared play experiences



Together we played listening games such as “Guess The Sound”. Initially these games mostly consisted of reminders to *gently* place instruments down, place them *in their own space* not on top of each other, *wait, one at a time* so we can hear each sound etc. Soon the children began to play the instruments correctly, and some began to experiment and we heard comments like “listen to this sound, now listen, it sounds different doesn’t it “. Nathan however was still adamant that he could play two instruments at once, and required gentle reminders to place the instruments carefully on the mat. This led to a discussion about playing one instrument at a time. So an experiment followed, we played one instrument, then tried two at a time and struggled to play three. Then we asked the children for their thoughts; “It’s hard to hold that many”; “I dropped the shaker”; “I can’t hear the sounds properly”; “It’s too loud”; “I can’t play it like you are supposed to”.

EYLF: Children participate in collaborative activities and contribute to group goals.

The children were able to revisit their learning using the instruments with the Centre’s music teacher, Wendy. This gave the children the opportunities to express their new vocabulary, which not only included the names of the instruments, but also descriptive words about how to play eg. “shake it, strike it, tap it”. The children were now able to listen and wait for instruction and show value and respect for the instruments.



Our music teacher also gave the children practice in combining the instruments with singing and movement to the tune of ‘I Am A Fine Musician’.

She split the large group into two, where one group would play an instrument each, such as the tambourine, for the other group so they could move their bodies to the sound that was being made. The groups changed roles so that everyone had a chance at practising playing instruments as well as moving their bodies to the sound.

This was repeated for a variety of instruments including the triangles, bongo drums, maracas and the tapping sticks.

This experience was followed with discussion about how our bodies felt when they were moved to different instruments. Some of the comments included, “The triangle is a gentle sound, so I moved slowly”; “The bongo drums are so loud, I did stomping”; “I liked the tambourine the best, so I could wiggle and be silly”.



EYLF: Children respond verbally and non verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel and taste.

**RESPECT REFLECT RELATE:** The level of children's involvement indicates how well the educational environment succeeds in meeting children's learning priorities. When children are involved they not only arrive at what they set out to do or an alternative destination, they voluntarily keep going and make further and more complex connections.

The children were able to include the instruments within their play. On one occasion the triangle was used as an alarm bell while engaging in car play, "It's time for a rescue, the lifesaver needs to save someone in the water". On another occasion, the tambourine and maracas were taken on 'a bus ride to the zoo', and the group of eight children were singing "We're All Going to the Zoo Tomorrow". On many occasions, the instruments were spontaneously added to dancing and singing. Children would come into the music area, experiment with instruments, leave and engage in other experiences before returning.



**EYLF:** Children show an increasing capacity to understand, self regulate and manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others.

This picture shows a child using the maracas while singing the Happy Birthday song while looking at the photos of all the children's birthday celebrations in kindy and singing the song for each child displayed.



Through the regular opportunities to take turns exploring the individual instruments, the children are becoming confident in sharing their learning.

During a game of "Guess What I've Got", a child (who had only recently transitioned to kindy just like Nathan, previously) listened intently before she guessed the instrument and responded, "It's the shakers". But Nathan who was now a regular and star of the music area, declared indignantly, "No it's not, you shake them, but they are called maracas".

**RESPECT REFLECT RELATE:** Without a strong sense of wellbeing, children have difficulty maintaining involvement. Within wellbeing, optimism and agency arise giving children a sense of hope and an 'I can do it' feeling



The learning continues....

EYLF Principle 5  
Ongoing learning and reflective practice  
The educators' story

Once upon a time and far, far away, there was a group of teachers who knew how to play, but were far too scared to sing and dance all day.



The children at our centre wanted to dance and sing, but the teachers found it hard to actively join in.

The educators knew it was important to sing and dance, but needed some support to build their confidence.

They learnt it was important for movement and literacy, you see, so with some colleagues they got together, to share ideas about how to sing and dance better.

After collecting data they wrote a philosophy, and assessed each other sing and use instruments with glee.

They participated in workshops about talking, writing and reading, and set forth a plan so all children are achieving.

There is more learning still to come, about changing practices as well as having fun!



**Using the Early Years Learning Framework, can you see:**

- how the educators have gathered information about children's interests and strengths?
- the educators' goals for children's learning drawn from the Framework?
- how the educators planned the learning environment and their role in children's learning?
- how the educators designed the learning experiences and implemented their plans?
- how the educators documented and evaluated both children's learning and their teaching?



# Supporting Allisa's Aboriginal identity

## Allisa and Jimmy

Jimmy attends child care and kindergarten in an integrated service. He is 3 years old and lives with his Mum, Allisa, and two older brothers. Jimmy sees his Dad on a regular basis. Jimmy has speech therapy and occupational therapy at the centre through a cooperative project between the education and the health departments.



His Mum, Allisa said "I hope kindy and childcare will make Jimmy ready for school. I want him to continue to build his confidence and friendships. I'm really happy with the staff here and the extra support he gets. I recommend this place to lots of people. I have been doing the Hanen program *You Make a Difference* at the centre. It's really helped me heaps at home. I get down on his level and it helps me focus on him. Jimmy responds to me better when I do this and it's really helped Jimmy progress well."

"I want the staff to be aware of Jimmy's Aboriginal culture and heritage. I didn't get it much growing up. My story is my Mum, she wasn't Aboriginal, taught me to read and write out on the Nullarbor where I grew up. Before I even went to school I was reading and writing. I was top of my class in reading and writing. I really enjoyed it and I learnt a lot. After my Dad died my Auntie looked after me. It was hard because I used to do everything with my Dad.

"I've done lots of research about my Aboriginal background as an adult. I remember I had an Aboriginal Education Worker back in 1984. He was the one teacher in the school that looked out for me and asked me how I was going after my father passed away. He was the only one who acknowledged my loss. He took me under his wing and worked with me a lot. That was the best part of primary school. He did lots of things around Aboriginal culture with us. He taught us about the Elders, cooking bush tucker, painting, etc" Allisa said.

## Possible ideas

**What does Allisa's story tell you about her hopes and aspirations for Jimmy?**

**How would you support Jimmy to develop his identity and sense of belonging in the Centre?**

**Think about the impact the Aboriginal Education Worker had on Allisa, on her sense of identity and belonging.**

**Think about your relationships with children and families in your centre. What might be the impact of your practices with the children you work with?**

## Long Day Care, Jack - aged two years

### Context

It is after sleep time for Jack. He lies on his bed for a few minutes and watches the children at the blackboard. They are drawing bugs and insects and telling funny stories to each other. Jack looks at me and nods his head. "Lo Chloe" he says "sleeping" and then he smiles the most beautiful smile and I think and then say "Yes Jack, you were sleeping, I think maybe you feel quiet but full of energy." Jack really had not wanted to sleep; he was 'resistant' to the idea from the morning, through lunch and into preparing the sheets for his bed. "Jack no sleep, Jack big now, no, no, no, no, no!"

### Jack's learning

Several of the other children have been transitioning to no sleep during care. They seem to have sorted out their rest and relaxation needs, and can regulate their states without being told by an adult. Because I have a mixed age group the children do watch and model each other even if we see them as having different needs. This is tricky and Jack, his parents and I talk about this. When is it okay for us adults to decide what a child needs? Is it harder for children to work out what they need when someone else is always telling them? What do I do with an 'over tired' child? I have cared for children in the past whose family have asked that they eat but what do I do about a child who simply refuses? Is that how children grow into adults who do not know if they are hungry or not? "My body is saying one thing, but Chloe is saying another."

### My reflection

Jack has such a successful afternoon exiting and entering play. He asks other children with a "Me too?" and touches some children on the arm and their back in a prompting way. I notice as well that Jack looks to me, with what feels like a sense of trust and partnership. I remember helping him to sleep. Does he remember too? I tried to be kind. Letting Jack know I was helping and that because I am wiser (by virtue of my old age and experience!) that his afternoon would be a success if he had a sleep. I thought so long about the words to use as I soothed him to sleep, to be in charge but not physically forceful, and to think about what success would look and feel like to Jack. My success would be less physical struggles and a greater ability to have his engagement needs met. He wants so much to be a group player, to have ideas, follow his theories and to follow the lead of his resourceful peers. I think sometimes, because Jack is in a frazzled tired body and brain, he seems to other children to be powerful and forceful. Really though he is struggling to belong in this community of capable (and rested) children.

So we persist with sleeping for Jack (and for the community who love Jack and want to be with the Jack who is rested and 'quiet but full of energy', who no longer feels the need to be wary and can listen and tolerate his entry and exit from play). I do not feel anxious about sleep time with Jack any more even though it does not go the same way each day and sometimes I get my words wrong and sound like I am overriding his rights, which I don't want to do. I think about Jack the toddler caught between independence and dependence, and how I am sharing with him the way to do it together so he can do it on his own sometime in the future.

## **Learning Outcome from the Framework: Children are confident and involved learners using Kurna language in early childhood**

### **Context**

Our centre is on Kurna land and our centre uses Kurna greetings and songs in the program. Our centre is committed to providing an Aboriginal perspective throughout its program that is inclusive and respectful of Kurna language and culture. We were involved in learning about Australian animals and had introduced Australian character animals with the three and four year olds who were in long day care and sessional preschool. We had wanted to make the connection between home and the centre by having the children take the animals home for a 'sleepover'. We had named the animals by their Kurna names, Nuntu and Pilta.

### **What questions do educators and children have?**

- How do we learn more language?
- How do we develop respect and awareness about language and culture in children from all backgrounds?
- How do we say that in Kurna?
- Children and families readily named each animal with the Kurna name. Staff were excited about how children had confidently become familiar with new words and wondered how they could increase children's understanding of using more Kurna language with the children throughout the program. The children asked for more character dolls to take home so we added Kauwilta the platypus.
- We looked at the needs of the children and thought about what activities and experiences would strengthen their understanding of how to say things in different ways. We wondered how we could use visuals in both the outside and inside play environment to introduce children to new Kurna names.

### **What did they plan next?**

To increase the number of Kurna words we knew we made A4 picture cards of Australian animals with the English and Kurna names and we used these cards in songs and rhymes, in hide and seek games, in turn taking games, in matching games.

### **What happened next?**

Children became increasingly confident in the use of Kaurna names for Australian animals. During Book Week one child asked how we said zebra in Kaurna and we looked at the globe and read more books about African animals. Pilta, Nuntu and Kauwilta are much loved parts to the program at our centre and continue to provide opportunities for ongoing learning.



***Kauwilta meets Pria's pet bird  
at a sleepover at her house***

- **What does cultural competence mean in your practice, for children, family, community and educators?**
- **What do you know about the language/s that the children bring with them?**
- **How do you acknowledge the oral traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the curriculum?**
- **How do you demonstrate that you acknowledge and build on the context and discourse of each child and family?**
- **How will Elders, family and community members be invited to share culturally valued ways of creating, representing and responding? Are you creating time and opportunities for them to do this?**

## Exploring levels of outcomes with Emily aged 17 months

### Emily and energy

Emily pours the wooden eggs and their corresponding wooden egg cups onto the floor from their bucket. She listens to the clacking sound they make, then picks a handful and throws them down again. Emily starts to line the egg cups on the mat and the egg cups fall down periodically as she adds, rearranges and touches their bases slowly.

Moving past I cannot resist matching an egg to an egg cup and Emily turns around and looks. She collects two eggs per hand and places them on top of the nearest egg cup. They tumble and roll across the mat and Emily laughs and pushes several more cups over. Taking the bucket she refills it with eggs and small cane balls. She takes the egg cups and lines them up methodically on the table top where she seems to notice they balance more readily than on the mat. She pushes them with her finger to test their integrity and then begins to place an object, either an egg or ball, to each egg cup.

Another child approaches and Emily laughs a little and then pulls the bucket under her legs. I advocate for Emily's experience and say "Emily is working here, she is matching, and you can watch her work." Each time Emily uses both hands to push, guide or force the object to balance or sit inside. She screws up her face and makes distinct pushing noises, the more pushing, the more grunting. More pushing usually results in the item popping out and rolling on the floor. Sitting near by I say "Working hard" in response to Emily's concentration, effort and vocalising. In a long time the egg cups are either full or resting on their sides and Emily's bucket is empty. Emily also has moved on.

Previously, I would have been so tempted to attribute Emily's experience as being about matching and categorising objects and I know my intentional strategies in the moment were geared towards this. Since then I've been thinking more deeply about outcomes, levels of outcomes and the richness of children's learning. Previously, I would have planned for more matching and teaching Emily about the similarities and difference of the properties of objects. I also would have thought about whether Emily can begin to understand one to one correspondence. In my new life I know these ideas may still be valid, however I want to try to understand the possible theory.

Emily is exploring. In discussion with my colleagues we see a thread to other moments for Emily when she has explored energy. The right amount of energy needed to make the egg balance, the communication of energy being used through grunts, the pushing of the swing to go higher or lower and the baby stroller outside in the deeper sand. We have photos of Emily engaged in opening and shutting various doors and latches through the centre and her pushing items down and pulling items up the wooden climbing ramps. At home Emily has begun to request to carry bags and boxes and seems to generalise that larger items will require more effort puffing her cheeks and squatting. A few times she has resorted to rolling objects over her body to use her weight to shift them- "What a clever strategy" says Dad. It seems she is interested in energy!

## Two skyscrapers!

Alex and Oscar had been watching the workmen build our new amphitheatre in the garden at kindergarten. The boys came inside and told me that they wanted to copy the workmen and that they were going to build with the straw construction set.

They set to work and Oscar informed me that they were building a shopping centre, but Alex said that it was just a building. The boys joined the straws together forming cubes, they called the straws pipes and when they became dislodged they claimed that there was a leak.

Soon the construction was so tall that the boys asked if they could stand on a chair to reach the top and so continue building. Oscar said, "It's bigger than we thought it was!" I suggested that the boys lay their construction down so that they could reach the top. Oscar said, "Why didn't we think of that?"

We carefully lay down the building and the boys continued working. They predicted that the building would be 100 metres tall, REALLY tall. Oscar added, "a thousand bigger than the city on the moon". On completion I helped the boys stand their building up; it was ten storeys high, each cube representing a storey. We measured the building with a tape measure and discovered that it was 2.1 metres high.

Louis and Chris came inside later in the day and were very impressed with Alex and Oscar's building. They decided to construct a hotel and set to work joining the straws together. Louis told me that each storey was a room in the hotel. When the boys stood their cubes up, they discovered that theirs was in fact shorter than Alex's and Oscar's building. The hotel was eight storeys high and quickly calculated that for their building to be taller they would have to add two more storeys. Chris and Louis set to work and soon the eleven storey hotel was complete, one storey higher than the building of Oscar and Alex.

Through their play the boys demonstrated that they:

- are self organised and can use their initiative
- are persistent
- understand patterns
- are able to demonstrate critical thinking skills
- have an understanding of numeracy concepts
- can problem solve
- are self organised and cooperative.

## A Most Significant Change Story: Master Chef!

### **Context:**

Pete hit Chris over the head with a broomstick. Chris's Mum saw it happen. She helped me talk to the boys to resolve the problem and then comforted her child.

### **What I did:**

Seeing that Chris was being cared for, I took Pete aside and said, "Come with me for a little while. Let's go for a bit of a walk around holding hands". After a couple of minutes, I sat Pete next to me and asked if he was feeling ok. He said, "No. I had a sore tummy last night and I'm a bit tired today." Immediately I understood that he was having "one of those days". I gave him a hug and asked if he would like to play neighbours with me using the doll's houses and characters. We needed a moment of shared time, where we could rebuild his self-confidence, solidify our relationship and redirect his play.

### **What happened:**

When Pete was asked if he was ok, his entire body language changed from being rigid and uncomfortable to being relaxed and open. He put his whole body and face close to mine. He let his tough guard down and expressed his true emotions. Shortly after, we went to play with the doll's houses.

In our play roles we lived together and we went to visit our neighbours to invite them over for lunch. We served sandwiches and chicken noodle soup and helped each other with the dishes. We laughed and created a new script to play with.

After 10 – 15 minutes we moved on to the home corner where he found an apron. I helped Pete tie it on and away he went role-playing as Master Chef in his own restaurant. Pete extended his own interest in cooking and was deeply involved in this role for more than half an hour. He greeted other children as his guests, showed them to their seat, took their order, cooked and served their food, washed their dishes and cleaned the kitchen. All the while, Pete could be his real self: a polite, gentle, organised leader who was respected and fun to be around.

From there, Pete's self-confidence and wellbeing was restored. For the rest of the day he enjoyed himself. He made smart choices about his own learning and in his interactions with other educators and peers.



**What I learnt:**

The technique of reconnecting works. By investing ten minutes to address Pete's wellbeing and redirect his play, he was able to:

- *Belong*: he was the Master Chef of his own restaurant and he had friends working collaboratively with him.
- *Be*: his authentic self in the moment.
- *Become*: the person he wants to be in the future.

**In what ways did the educators promote Pete's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing?**

**How would you share Pete's developing sense of identity with his family?**

**What does the story reveal about staff's beliefs about how children learn and the role of the educator?**

**How does having something to successfully contribute to a group influence a person's sense of belonging?**

**Is it possible for a child to learn in an environment where they don't feel they belong?**

**Are there children in our service who struggle to belong?**





## Long Day Care, Amber - aged 20 months

I receive a call from a parent, Josie, whose toddler, Amber is due to start next month. “She has been super unwell” she says “and is currently on oxygen.” We are an inclusive service and this is just when that inclusion is tested. Even if your experience is ‘different’ it should be equal and just. You should be as involved and engaged as you want to be. I try to ‘normalise’ it back to Mum and say ‘It is just the same as a child who needs soy milk. We research it, we resource it and then we do it.’

I make a list of what this might mean to my service. How will the child’s mobility be affected? How will the other children respond to the equipment? How much preparation should we give them about this change? How will we keep the equipment safe, maintained and operational? Medically is there any procedure or policy we should be trained in? How do parents talk to their child about Amber having this equipment when others do not? Are there any play experiences that will be difficult, excluded or medically dangerous for the child? (We had a child with terribly painful contact dermatitis if he played with sand. He wore floppy latex gloves because he was so determined to be included in sand pit play).

The tricky balance, as always with children with special rights, is to value their competence, not to over emphasise their difference.

### **Two months later:**

After just over two months Amber is starting to settle, play alongside other children and connect with her carers. Before she came we talked with the toddlers about what her machine might look like and the noises it might make. The carers, Amber’s parents and one of her doctors also had a conference call with us and we heard that Amber’s machine was quite robust and that there was a well written plan for what to do if the machine failed, became disconnected or caused Amber distress. Amber’s parents also wrote a note for the room newsletter about Amber’s needs and how precious she was.

It was an open process where the other children would approach and touch the machine carefully and Mum or Dad would tell them how Amber was feeling, and what she wanted to do that day. Other families talked about ways in which they, their children or people they knew lived with difference. One of the children was a little fearful of the machine and we helped him understand it was the machine he found fearful not Amber herself. We also looked at other noisy machines and one of the Dads brought in his asthma nebulizer to see, feel and smell.

Some parents commented that Amber’s inclusion was confirmation that we would do what we could for all children – that if difficulties arose for them in the future we would be a strong partnership. Mum was pleased with her decision to pursue care for Amber, and told us that when we arrived last week a little girl in the room walked to Amber and smiled, and Amber responded by holding the little girl’s hand. She said she cried as she had not expected this response, or that the program would have such an impact!

**This story provides illustration of educators putting into practice the five Principles of the Framework in an inclusive setting.**

## Molly's magnificent machine

Molly and her friend Emma were laughing and working together at the pasting table. Emma was making a bus and Molly was attaching bottle lids to the top of her box.

Every now and then Molly would 'fly' the box around the room. "Do you need some buttons or switches for your machine?" asked Sarah. Molly nodded and said she would like stickers which we found in the office.

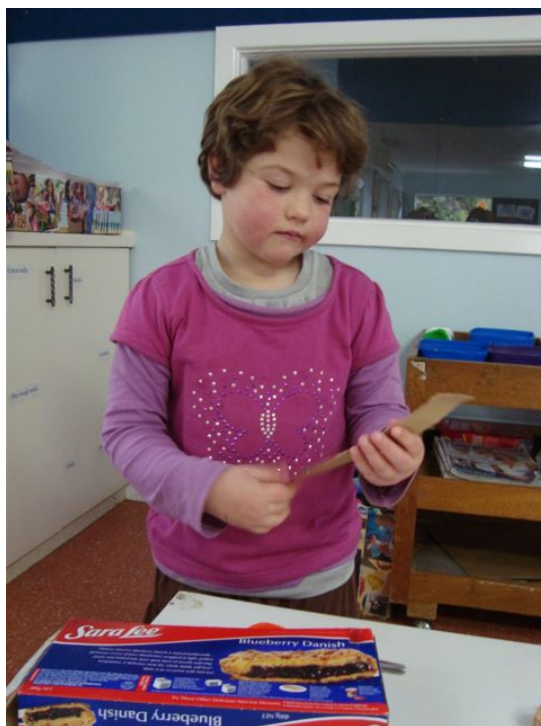
Matthew had words on his stickers and Molly liked this idea. "I want that one to say 'Fast'" requested Molly. She didn't want to write or copy the letters so Sarah wrote them for her.

Next Molly needed wings. She cut carefully around a side panel from another box and then estimated the half way point and cut the piece to make two wings. Molly was able to place the tape half on the box and half on the wing so it would stick on.

Next she made windows. Starting with a small hole in the side of her machine she tried to cut a window. "Can you help me with it?" she asked when she couldn't manipulate the scissors. Molly made another window by herself. "What about someone to fly the machine?" asked Sarah.

Molly drew a tiny picture of herself and stuck it in through the window. This was fiddly and tricky! She made a cardboard flap on the back of the machine and made a tiny nest to sit in there. But Riley couldn't see out so she cut two more windows for him.

Lastly, Molly wisely stuck down the flap to make sure Riley wouldn't fall out! (Riley is Molly's big brother.)



### **Short term review**

What a magnificent machine you created Molly! Good to see you watching and gathering ideas from other children and asking for help when you needed it. Your smile at the end showed how proud you are of what you created. I wonder if you will be a real pilot when you grow up?

### **Learning Outcome 1**

- children feel safe, secure and supported
- children have a strong sense of identity

### **What next?**

Molly is still reluctant to 'engage' some times so it was good to see her prepared to work alongside her friend and accept input from a teacher. She does enjoy this when she relaxes into it and we will continue to gently support her in these types of activities.



**In what way does this story reveal the educator's responsiveness to children?**

**What role(s) did the educators adopt in supporting Molly's learning through play?**

**What role did the educator take in supporting and furthering Molly's learning?**

**How might you use this learning story as evidence of Molly's engagement with the learning outcomes described in the Framework?**

## Planning for Madison's wellbeing Family Day Care, Madison aged three

### **Context**

12 June

Madison has two houses and she used to have only one. Having two houses is tricky. Today she leaves her snuggle behind at mum's house and she cannot take it to Dad and Jade's house. She plaintively cries for home. But which home?

### **Madison's challenges**

18 June

Madison yells "Go away, go away you" when Skye and Mitchell's parents come to pick them up, she kicks and spits. Then she runs and hides behind the curtains. Mitchell's Dad says "She is soooo sad, she is too little to be so sad."

22 June

All morning Madison asks me "Who's on the bus, where did it go, where it going?" What bus is she asking about? This is different from a passionate interest, it feels anxious. She stands at the door or the window and comments each time she hears a vehicle.

24 June

Again today Madison asks about the bus and she pulls at her fingernails. Shani has been away unwell and when I talk with her mum on the phone Madison is standing next to me holding my hand. When I say goodbye she begins to wail. It makes me want to weep because she has never expressed before this raw sense of loss. Today it is based around a friend who is missing.

In the afternoon Madison becomes angry that there is no more water in the trough "Give me more now NOW" and when Stella eats the last piece of banana she throws her own sultanas and slaps at Stella's legs. Before her two houses Madison would have said "Good sharing Stella. You and me have some" or asked me to "put on your list bananas for Stella." Has she lost some sense of agency and choice? Is she on a run away train just as much as we are?

### **My reflections**

2 July

I realise today that I have not been noticing Madison's experience beyond this struggle to handle and integrate this change. I no longer notice her puzzle work, her love of books or her growing interest in making marks on paper and card. Actually though this is the most significant learning that is happening right now. When I am writing all this down I see that I know Madison is learning from us how to be in change, how to share and regulate feelings and that we will listen when she says "I am not okay." Actually Mum and Dad are not okay either but Madison needs them to be okay.

I know she cannot tell me what is at the core of handling this change. Is her life better now than before? Could she be happy if she was more resilient? How will I talk to Mum and Dad about her feelings when they are already so sore and hurting?

## Occasional Care, Isaac and Aaron - aged 11 months

Paige is helping Isaac and Aaron have lunch within the gated kitchen. Isaac has just made it to lunch but is nearly falling asleep in his bowl. Why wait to eat? He seems to sleep better when he has tried to eat. He likes to eat and he likes to sleep. There is food all over the floor and Isaac attempts several times to stand up and his bare feet is making it so slippery.

Paige tries to help him wipe up and he starts to cry and say 'gee gee' seeming to point at his snuggly blanket on the top of the fridge. Paige is looking the other way at Aaron who is still trying to scoop some final food into his mouth. He is smiling widely and food is spilling out onto the table and the floor. "Isaac, you are so tired, you are trying so hard to be okay and it is tricky." She looks behind her and sees Isaac rubbing his eyes and putting his fingers to his mouth. "Oh dear I see you are really telling the world about being tired and I need to wipe your hands up so you can hold gee gee."

She passes him the cloth and he swipes at his hands and cheeks, moaning a little and shaking his head. Aaron is looking at Isaac and says "sad" and reaches out to stroke Isaac's cheek. He gestures to Isaac's snuggle as if to say "Get that for him, he needs it." Isaac buries his head in his blanket and cries "Paige! Paige!" Paige begins to wipe at the floor while holding Isaac's hand and looking at him smiling slightly.

The floor is very unsafe and Aaron cannot stay in there without Paige. She opens the gate for Isaac and he stumbles out a little and sits on the floor. "I need to check your nappy is not wet so you are comfy for sleeping," Paige says to Isaac. "And right now I am helping Aaron finish up lunch and making the floor safe." All the time Paige continues to talk calmly and quietly to Isaac and look at him so he can see her intent and connection. Isaac is crying, Isaac is tired, Isaac needs help and Paige is right there, staying connected and letting Isaac know she is listening. He is resilient enough to wait for just a few minutes, not too long, and to continue to say "I need help, do not look away from me." Paige helps Aaron through the kitchen gate and he sits down next to Isaac and starts to hum, a kind, empathic hum of recognition.

Paige smiles to Aaron and says "Thanks for helping. Now we can cuddle, change that nappy and have a sleep." Isaac grabs onto Paige's hand and is just too tired to walk. He cries out and Paige bends down and scoops him up. Isaac puts his head to her shoulder and Paige says "We have been very busy, you and I. Aaron was kind to you, it is so hard to wait, and now we are together you can go to bed."

**In what ways is this learning story an example of co-construction?**

**What information collected by the educators would contribute to assessment for learning?**

**What does the story reveal about staff's beliefs about how children learn and the role of the educator?**

# Peekaboo!



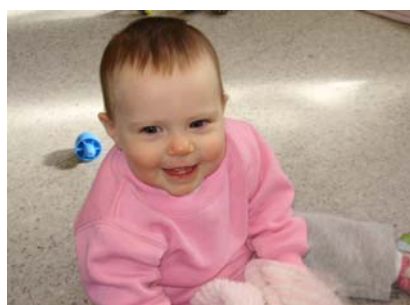
Layla was sitting on the floor. "Ah!" she said. I turned around and came to sit in front of her. She handed me her blanket and I put it in front of my face. "Ah boo!" I said. Layla giggled. I handed her the blanket and she put it over her own face, pulling it away and crying, "Ah!" again.

"Peekaboo Layla," I said and she laughed, handing me the blanket again. We played Peekaboo back and forth for a few minutes before Layla moved away.

Thinking she had grown bored with our play I got up to move too. Layla squealed and I turned to find her looking through one of the big wooden boxes. I crouched down on the other side.

Layla ducked her head in and out of the box with a grin and then pointed to me. I copied her action. "Boo!" she said, seeming delighted with her new game.

We continued this game, Layla laughing every time until it was time for afternoon snack.



# Analysis of learning

While playing Peekaboo, Layla is learning many different things – first is a huge milestone in development known as Object Permanence. *Learning that something exists even when it is not in a child's line of sight helps them to learn from and repeat experiences therefore extending on their learning.* Layla was able to initiate play with me and engage in reciprocal play and turn taking. When Layla became bored with the repetitive nature of the play, Layla was able to decide on a new direction for the play, varying the specifics, while maintaining the base element of the play and also her delight in it.

Layla was willing and able to specifically seek out the attention of me – as her primary caregiver – showing that her attachment to me is developing as it should.

## What next

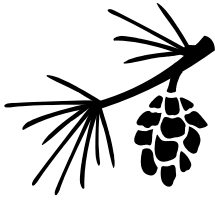
Layla is naturally curious about her environment and willing to interact with it. Providing a range of varied experiences for her to experiment with will help extend on her learning. Toys such as pop up and posting toys will help deepen her learning of *object permanence*.

One on one and shared enjoyable experiences will help our developing primary care attachment and give Layla the confidence and trust to be able to explore her environment with less inhibition, therefore learning more and more.

- Principles** *Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships.* In this story there is strong evidence that the educator is in tune with Layla's thoughts. Supporting the development of a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Practice** *Responsiveness to children.* The educator was responsive to Layla's interest and engaged with her in her learning.
- Outcomes** *The children have a strong sense of identity.* In this example there is evidence that the educator was aware of Layla's developing sense of agency and responded sensitively to this.

**What teaching strategies did the educator use to engage Layla in the learning process?**

**What does the story reveal about staff's beliefs about how children learn and the role of the educator?**



## Pine cones and cumquats

### Ruby's learning story



Ruby walked quickly into the room clutching a plastic bag named 'Ruby's bag'. It seemed heavy and bulging as she needed two hands to manage it. She came straight up to me and said "Quick, I've got to show you my pine cones that I collected under a tree!" She started to unpack the pine cones as we moved to make room! Previously a child had been counting his leaves on the ground so there were numbers drawn in chalk on the carpet. Ruby announced "let me count how many I collected for you!" as she started to line them up she looked up at me and asked "Is this maths?" Of course I replied, delighted that she had made the connection.



I suggested we put some paper under the pine cones so we could write the numerals as she counted. "Yeah sure," said Ruby. She reached the edge of the paper with her pine cones as she counted "Six" and I commented "Uh oh, there's too many and they won't fit on the paper." I suggested "Just get another one Ruby," laughing at my apparent silliness! She ended up with three pieces of paper, just enough to fit them on - "Yeah they can fit" smiled Ruby. The other children watched patiently as she went through the process of counting each pine cone right up to the number 15, touching each one.

Ruby looked again, hesitated and then began shifting the pine cones around. After asking what she was thinking Ruby replied "I'm finding the big ones and then the little ones" She had sorted the pine cones into a sliding scale of size! She smiled as we gave her a thunderous round of applause.



Ruby had also brought in a bag of cumquat seeds and I suggested we count these too to see if there were more seeds or more pine cones. As Ruby put each seed in front of a pine cone she realised there were more seeds and said "There's more seeds." "Great maths Ruby! How many more?" I asked. No replies "How can we find out?" Ruby didn't say anything she just started to count. She counted up to 19 without missing a beat. I commented "Oh, there's 15 pine cones and 19 seeds!" wondering if I can take it to the next level of critical thinking. "How many more seeds than pine cones are there?" and placed my hands under the remaining seeds to give a visual indicator.

Ruby moved toward me, leant over and counted the remaining four cumquat seeds that didn't have a pine cone partner. "Four" exclaimed Ruby and I replied, "Great maths, Ruby!"



## Evaluation

Ruby and her family have really embraced our numeracy project by helping Ruby to collect and bring a variety of nature collections. Her intent right from the start of this experience was to play in a mathematical way with the pine cones. Ruby has often asked me during her activities recently “Is this maths?” She is really making the connections between play and maths and developing a wonderful confidence in her ability to use mathematical tools and skills. Ruby can count to 15 using one-to-one correspondence, sort and discriminate by size and on at least three occasions in this activity she solved mathematical problems by using strategies such as counting, counting on, substituting and visualising. Ruby is applying her knowledge and understanding of powerful mathematical ideas to find solutions to all kinds of situations.

## What next?

It is time to find out whether Ruby can play and critically think about what would happen if we couldn't count. Can she generalise her understanding of the connections between mathematics and her world? Let's set up a shop so she can sell her collections – and challenge her situations such as *What if someone asks for four shells and we don't know how to count? What if someone buys ten shells and I don't know how many are left? How much money have I got?* Interesting!

## Linking to the Framework Principles, Practices and Outcomes

Principles	In this story you can see the educator has high expectations and belief in Ruby's capacity to succeed. There is evidence that the educator has worked in partnership with families, encouraging them to become involved in the curriculum.
Practices	In this story the educator is clearly responsive to Ruby building on her interest and knowledge. She has used some thoughtful, intentional teaching and created a welcoming learning environment. She has used assessment in an authentic situation to monitor Ruby's learning.
Outcomes	Ruby has demonstrated learning in all five of the Framework outcomes.

**In what ways does this story demonstrate intentional teaching?**

**What information collected by the educators would contribute to assessment for learning?**

**How did the educators provoke and maintain children's interest in maths?**

**In what way does this story reveal the educators' responsiveness to children?**

**What role did the educator take in supporting and furthering Ruby's learning?**

**Without the educator's questioning what opportunities would have been lost?**

- How often do we stop to ask the question and engage in a child's play to extend or scaffold their thinking and learning?
- How does our engagement support children to see themselves as confident and involved learners?

# Reflections



Alyssa pulled her head up from the mattress to discover her own reflection in the mirror. She focussed and ran her fingers over each other looking like she was deep in thought!

Alyssa followed her movements with her eyes. I could hear “ba be ba” as she watched her tongue move with her sounds.

As I mimicked Alyssa expressing “ba be ba” I could see her eyes change towards my reflection and concentrate on my movements. Alyssa expressed “ba ba ba” and smiled.

I returned the smile and connected this by song and started to sing “Baa Baa Black Sheep”.

Alyssa’s eyes then widened as she watched me and listened to the sound.

Once finished Alyssa then repeated “baa baa baa”, looking at me to reconnect and continue.





### **Analysis of learning**

Alyssa experimented with her reflection by using her eyes to follow her movements with her arms and mouth when she created sounds.

The mirror provided an opportunity for Alyssa to connect with me by using sounds and babbles to initiate and engage in reciprocal sustained interactions.

Alyssa's eyes widened as we connected and she watched and listened indicating she felt safe for me to enter her play. This connection is important because once strengthened Alyssa will feel safe to explore the environment and open up further learning opportunities.

Babies are born with highly developed sensory and language capabilities. This is evident as Alyssa used vocalisations, eye contact and gestures to engage with me and communicate with me. Children's language skills develop in close caring relationships where their developed language is valued and built upon.

### **What next**

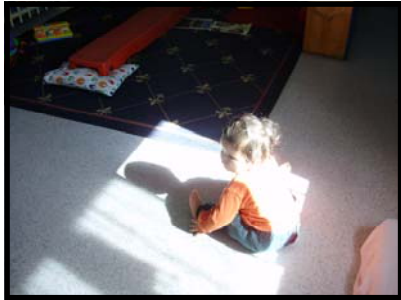
Provide opportunities throughout the day where Alyssa and I can spend one on one time connecting through song (voice) and massage (touch), eye contact and facial expressions.

Respond back to Alyssa's sounds to increase her awareness that her language is valued and build upon this through song, rhyme and stories.

**In what ways can you see evidence of the educator using the Principles and Practices of the Framework to support Alyssa's learning?**

**How do spontaneous teachable moments fit in an outcomes based learning framework?**

# Shadow exploration



Beautiful sunlight has been peering through our windows since the old veranda has come down and the new one built.

One afternoon Ryder moved himself towards the warmth from the sun on the floor, glowing from the light.

As he moved his arm Ryder concentrated on the effect it had made in front of him. He then swayed his body backwards and forwards and watched as his shadow from the light moved in sync with him. Ryder then leant closer to observe and used his hands to touch the outline and create further shadows.

Ryder then started tapping his hands on the floor creating clapping sounds and wriggled his toes expressing excitement.

Ryder looked up and to me (I was smiling) and I explained to him that it was 'a shadow' and pointed at it, thus creating some more patterns. Ryder then touched where I was pointing and tapped onto the floor.

He watched as he swayed, tapped his feet together and was delighted to discover that the shadow moved too!

### **Analysis of learning**

Ryder was very curious to discover the functions and attributes of the shadow as he used his senses to explore it. He watched movements and patterns created and then became confident to lean in and test it and touch it with gentle strokes at first and then by tapping.

Ryder expressed during this story his ability to take risks, and search out learning opportunities. This is important for learning as it opens up new and rewarding experiences and skills.

Ryder expressed great satisfaction with his discovery as he clapped and wriggled his toes with excitement. He was also happy to share his exploration with me as he looked towards me and watched to find further sights and movements as I pointed with my finger.

### **What next**

Explore sensory environments with Ryder like textured paper, materials and shakers that create lots of sound and water play when the weather gets warmer.

Providing resources that move, for example, exploring the parachute and sheer material that glides down, providing balls with different sizes including the large green ball, placing materials outside or near the window that flutter with the wind and bubble blowing.

Exploring push up and pull along experiences that create a reaction.

**Which of the Framework's principles, practices and outcomes are evident in this story?**

**How do spontaneous teachable moments fit in an outcomes based learning framework?**

**In what ways did the educators support the children to develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating?**

## Leena's grandmother and the rainbow serpent story

Leena's grandmother (Aunty Leticia) would sometimes come to the centre to drop off Leena. She was always interested in spending time with children and educators to discover what they were learning.

Sally, the preschool teacher, asked Aunty Leticia if she wanted to come in and spend some time with the children. Leena was very excited about this idea and quickly asked if her grandmother could come the following week.

Leena's grandmother expressed that she was interested in the arts and would like to do something creative with the children where she could demonstrate some Aboriginal art techniques. Sally and Aunty Leticia spent some time talking with the children about what project they might like to do. Together it was decided that they would interpret the dreaming story of the rainbow serpent, a story that was already familiar to the children.

Leena's grandmother came in the first week on a few different sessions to tell the story about the rainbow serpent to the children. The group spent time discussing the storyline and how they were going to make a replica of the rainbow serpent.

The next week Aunty Leticia visited again and showed them different techniques of how to use brushes and sticks to make patterns, swirls and waves.

We left materials out for the following weeks for the children to create their interpretation of the serpent. Their interest in the story led us to explore how the birds got their colours and more involvement with Aunty Leticia.



### Reflection and outcomes

- Partnerships: collaborating with children and their family
- Transitions: bridging the gap between home and life at the centre
- Belonging: links with identity and sense of belonging
- Intentional teaching: Aunty Leticia demonstrating techniques
- Cultural competence: telling a dreaming story from her culture and Leena's culture

## Tracks and connections: revealing talents through shared interests.



### Context:

The Community School is an integrated site which provides for children and their families from birth to year seven. The Kindy Room includes both preschool and long day care for children between 3.5 and 5 years. Our planning is framed around *Big Ideas* – at this time we were focussing on Community: people, places and events. Caleb initiated the link with trains because he saw them as a significant part of his community.

### What happened?

One afternoon, after the main preschool session had finished, Caleb was working on his track. Caleb had set himself the project of documenting the train track from his house to the city – he had worked on this consistently over a number of weeks. Tyson was looking intently at Caleb while he worked. He looked at me inquiringly. “It’s a track,” I said, “Caleb likes trains and Tyson likes trains.” He looked back at Caleb then back at me and said “Can I make it?”

“Sure”, I replied and got him the paper to start. As Tyson was unsure, I started with two parallel lines and gave him the pen. Tyson then proceeded to draw the cross lines, extend the parallel lines and include details such as stations, trees and flowers. “Po comes to the station,” he told Leah, who was sitting with him as he extended his ideas. Tyson kept looking back at Caleb’s work – but he didn’t make direct conversation with him. Tyson’s documentation, while very similar, had some different elements to Caleb’s documentation.

The broad nature of the big idea *Community, People, Places and Events*, allowed Caleb to pursue a passion and to have this extended as part of the program. Teachers facilitated dramatic play using simple props and this again connected Caleb with others. A small group excursion was planned which included a visit to the city train station. This brought Caleb into relationship with others who shared his interests. Caleb has many significant talents but also experiences challenges in making and sustaining social connections with others – the big idea allowed him to express himself – but also to connect meaningfully with others. At the end of last year, Caleb was reluctant to express himself in drawing – while he remains reticent about painting, Caleb is expressing his ideas and making meaning through the medium of drawing.

Tyson is a child with special rights, who has just moved to the Kindy Room this term. He receives support for language, socialisation and also motor skills as an assessment identified many traits that fit with the broad description of Autism spectrum disorder. Prior to this term, he has spoken very little, often in repeated phrases or words. His question “Can I make it?” was so significant, appropriate to the context, initiated by his interest and communicating his desire. Also significant was the level of representation and description in his drawing. Clearly Caleb’s response to the big idea had sparked Tyson to show his knowing in ways staff had previously not understood.



### Linking to the Framework Outcomes

Principles	Respect for diversity Ongoing learning and reflective practice
Practice	Responsiveness to children Cultural competence
Outcomes	Children are connected with and contribute to their world Children are effective communicators



# Travelling with Di

## **Context**

Our kindergarten is a stand alone preschool that offers two sessions per day with two qualified early childhood teachers. We have a diverse community with many families receiving government support and different cultural groups represented as well as Aboriginal families. Bilingual support is an integral part of the preschool.

Di lives with her mother and her two brothers aged 6 and 13. Di's mother asks for support to help her manage her children's behaviour. She is very caring and loving in her relationship with her children and wants to do the best for them.

## **Di's early kindergarten experiences**

To support her speech and language development, Di had early entry to Kindergarten. For the first two and a half terms her play was mostly parallel and she often found it challenging to sustain her involvement in activities. She continually challenged us with her frustrations, doing such things as lying on the floor when asked to do something, rolling around and climbing on the furniture.

## **Planning for Di**

As a staff team we tried many strategies to engage her but the positive result would usually be brief. She did spend long periods of time on the trapeze bars practising and when she was given descriptive praise she would just look, not an unhappy look more like a stare and no verbal response. The staff concluded that she also experienced a degree of anxiety, and maybe shaky wellbeing and sense of agency. It was agreed that we give her a role of responsibility, a special job to do at group time. This had mixed outcomes at first but we persisted. One morning we introduced Tim Guster's 'Look out for the Snake' song and a child was chosen to be the snake over my shoulder. The next day I asked Di if she would like to be the snake. Previously she would shake her head and indicate no and sit firm. We were surprised when she took her place with the snake in hand behind my right shoulder. No singing, not a word, but she listened and did the actions.

## **Di's involvement**

The next day Di's mother came in and asked if we had a song about a snake. Yes, well Di has got a snake in her bag... she insisted on bringing it. So of course Di got to be the snake again!

A day later she sat quietly at the collage table and cut around a cereal box. She was making a snake. At group time she was invited to show the children how she made her snake and we gave her a chair in front of the group next to the adult. We discussed the process with the group as she focused on the adult with an occasional glance to the group. While we sang she sat and cut and cut and cut making another snake.

For several days following this, she would return to the collage table, choose a box and cut another snake. The snakes now have eyes and a forked tongue.

## Outcomes

Di's self esteem has increased. She is interacting with others in her way, creating short sentences and making eye contact. She skips across the room at times and her eyes seem to reflect the joy in belonging. She is beginning to develop relationships with other children and is spending more time talking with peers. She is drawing and writing all the time and seems so pleased with herself.

There are still times when her behaviour is challenging. However these are less frequent.

## Some weeks later

Today Di taught the teacher how to make a fan 'my way'! She was later observed sitting on the floor with her friend to whom she had given a fan. Di is now able to initiate her own activities and is engaged for longer period. She happily sits with other children and initiates conversation with them.

## Linking to the Framework Outcomes

Children have a strong sense of identity	Di is beginning to express her feelings and ideas and is able to respond positively to ideas and suggestions from others. She demonstrated confidence in joining in the song and snake game. She was very pleased and recognised her achievement in cutting out the snakes.
Children are connected with and contribute to their world	Through her participation in the snake song Di was demonstrating her ability to participate in the group and cooperate with others.
Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	Di's definitely beginning to express happiness and satisfaction and demonstrated increasing competence in the making of her snakes.
Children are confident and involved learners	The making of the snakes allowed Di to initiate an idea that she thought of and she was able to persist and achieve her goal. She demonstrated the ability to transfer knowledge from the snake song to the representation and making of the snake.
Children are effective communicators	Di engaged initially in a non verbal way with the snake song and later she was able to engage verbally in their experience. She was able to contribute and share her ideas with the larger group. She is able to use creative means (making the snake) to express ideas and make meaning.

**In what ways did the educators promote Di's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing?**

**How would you share Di's developing sense of identity with her family?**

**What does the story reveal about staff's beliefs about how children learn and the role of the educator?**

**How does having something to successfully contribute to a group influence a person's sense of belonging?**

**Is it possible for a child to learn in an environment where they don't feel they belong?**

**Are there children in our service who struggle to belong?**

Travelling with Di: Look out for the snake!



After learning the song 'Look out for the Snake' Di cuts a snake from a cereal box.



Look how long it is! Di is very keen to share with the team.



Showing the group how it's done!



Di explains to the group what she is doing and how she is making the snake shape.



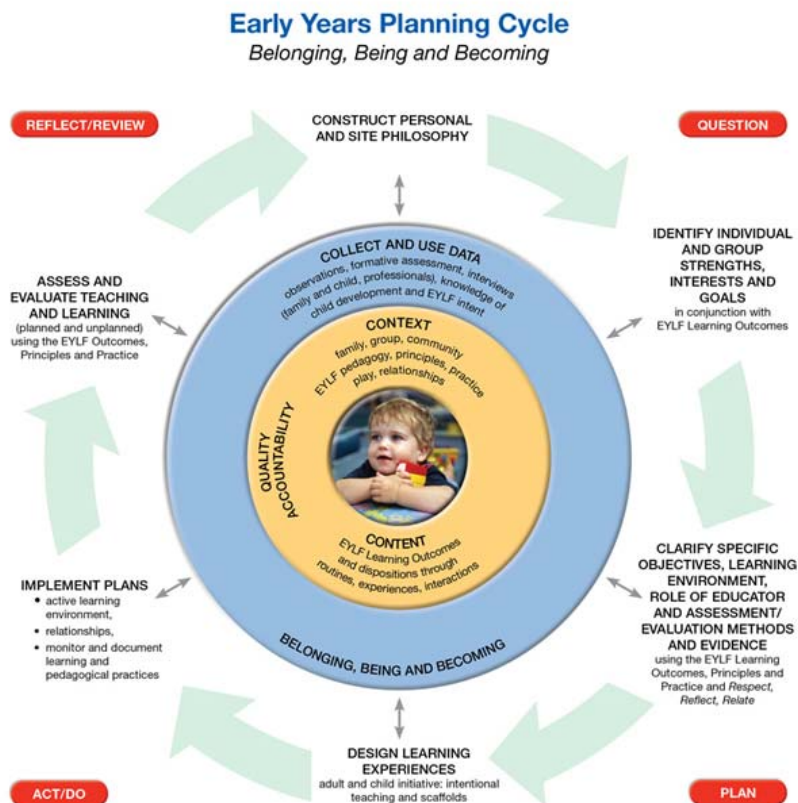
Di continues to cut as the rest of the group joins in with singing.



Almost done. This has been 15 minutes of concentrated activity. The positive feedback she received led to ongoing snakes being made!

# EARLY YEARS PLANNING CYCLE IN PRACTICE

## *Belonging, being and becoming*



### **Outcome: children are confident and involved learners**

- Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
- Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating
- Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another

**Inquiry question:** *How do we measure up? What opportunities do we provide for children to see the purpose of measurement in their world?*

We have become very aware at our kindergarten that maths is everywhere and we are making a conscious effort to use the correct mathematical terms with the children. We have observed that the children were often measuring height and length with tape measures and rulers which are always available for them to use. They also have access to timers and use these in their play. After looking at the numeracy matrix the question *what opportunities do we provide for children to see the purpose of measurement in their world?* caught our attention.

### **Clarify specific objectives**

We wondered if the children in our centre were aware of different forms of measurement and the purpose of different forms. We decided to explore this question with the children and to also introduce non-standard forms of measurement. We planned to look at ways of measuring time, area, weight, perimeter and angles and introduce the children to estimating, predicting and comparing.

## Plan

Learning experiences planned included:

- questioning children about what we can measure and how we can measure
- sending home a questionnaire to the children's families asking them how they use measurement at home and at work
- purchasing new equipment to enhance children's understanding of measurement - clocks, soccer balls and nets, measuring cups, dice of varying sizes and scales
- collecting shells, seed pods and pebbles to use as non standard units of measurement
- encouraging children to find other materials that could be used to measure

## Stories for reflection

### *Chris's stop sign*

Today Chris was busy hammering at the woodwork table. He had successfully joined together two pieces of long thin wood. I asked Chris whether he thought his long piece of wood would be taller than him and he thought, yes, it would be, so he held it up and yes it was taller than Chris. I then asked Chris if he thought the piece of wood would be taller than me. He wasn't too sure about that, so I held it up next to me and we found out the piece of wood was shorter. I then suggested to Chris that we could measure it to find out exactly how long his piece of wood was. When I asked how we could do that, Max who was standing close by said we could use a tape measure.

After we got the tape measure Chris laid his piece of wood on the pavers and then pulled out the measure and laid that next to his piece of wood making sure that the tape was exactly the same length as the piece of wood. We looked at the numbers on the tape measure and saw a big number one and a bit further at the end of the tape a four and a two together. Chris' sign measured 142 centimetres long.

Chris thought he could turn this piece of wood into a sign but wasn't too sure what sort of sign. I suggested maybe a stop sign. Chris thought that would be a good idea so I drew the special shape that was needed for the sign, an octagon. We looked at how many sides the octagon had and Chris counted eight. Chris then cut out the octagon shape, copied the word stop and then stuck the sign to his piece of wood. Chris seemed to be feeling pretty proud of his stop sign so we took a photo and Chris took one too.

This play experience gave Chris the opportunity to practise his hand eye coordination, fine motor and problem solving skills. He was exposed to mathematical language, numeracy concepts and had opportunity to use mathematical tools. Chris demonstrated persistence as he worked on his project and remained with it until it was completed to his satisfaction.

**This story could easily have finished when Chris joined together the two pieces of wood if the educator hadn't asked the question.**

**What opportunities would have been lost? How often do we stop to ask the question and engage in a child's play to extend or scaffold their thinking and learning? How does our engagement support children to see themselves as confident and involved learners?**

**In what way does this story reveal the educator's responsiveness to children?**

**What role did the educator take in supporting and furthering Chris's learning?**

**How might this one interaction or learning scenario develop Chris's learning dispositions of confidence and persistence?**

**How might you use this learning story as evidence of Chris's engagement with the Learning Outcomes described in the Framework?**

## Long jump in the sandpit



It was a lovely afternoon outside today so I took some tape measures, clip boards and textas to the sandpit. I also picked up the big rake and some small rakes from the shed.

Mandy got some witches hats to mark out the long jump part of the sandpit. The children helped with the raking to get ready for the next long jumper.

The children lined up very patiently waiting for their turn. When each person had a turn at jumping we measured the length that they had jumped then recorded the number next to their names. The children did some raking before the next person could have a turn.

They had several turns each then compared the lengths using mathematical language such as 'is that as long as my jump?' and 'that is longer than his jump'.

Some children were practising their jumping by jumping over the log by the sandpit while they waited for their turn. After a while Mandy and I put the tape measures by the sandpit and left the children to organise themselves as we observed from a distance.

It was lovely to see such a large number of children involved in this gross motor activity while gaining a greater understanding of the purpose of measurement and the use of mathematical terms to describe the distance such as centimetres.



**What do you think motivated the educator to do these particular activities with the children?**

**What does the Framework say about appropriate motivators/sources of curriculum and learning opportunities?**

**How do spontaneous teachable moments fit in an outcomes based learning framework?**

**In what ways do you co-construct learning experiences with your children and their families?**

**In what ways did the educator support the children to develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating?**

## Using sticks to measure in the garden

Today at small group time I showed the children three punnets of vegetable seedlings which we were going to plant in our garden. There were cherry tomatoes, snow peas and beetroot plants. I read the planting instructions to the children and we discovered that the snow peas were to be planted 5-10 cm apart, the beetroot 15cm apart and the tomatoes 70cm apart.

I drew a 5cm, a 15cm and a 70cm line on the whiteboard so that the children would have an understanding of the distance apart each plant needed to be. I asked the children what we could use to measure the distance between the plants when we were out in the garden and Matilda suggested using sticks, which was a great idea. I asked the children why some plants were planted closer together than others.

Louis said that the beetroot needed more spaces because they grew beneath the ground and they would bump into each other if they were planted too close together. We then talked about how high each of the plants could grow and how some would be wider and taller than others.

The children then went searching for sticks to use when we planted the vegetables. Charlotte found three different length sticks and came to check the lengths of her sticks with the lines I had drawn on the board. She was very excited when she discovered that her sticks were all similar lengths to the lines. It was now time to plant our vegetables and armed with their sticks the children dug up the soil, measured, planted and finally watered the plants.

The plants should be ready to start harvesting in 8-10 weeks time so I will display a calendar so that we can count down the weeks and we look forward to harvesting lots of cherry tomatoes, beetroot and snow peas.

### Assessing and evaluating strategies

- Learning story documentation and analysis
- Videos and photos of children engaged in measuring activities
- Interviews of children at a later date, to discover if their understanding of measurement is broader than it was at the beginning of our focus on measurement.

### Reflective questions for educators

- **In what ways does this planning example demonstrate intentional teaching?**
- **What information collected by the educators would contribute to assessment for learning?**
- **How did the educators provoke and maintain children's interest in measurement?**
- **How might this investigation into measurement support children's learning in all the Early Years Learning Framework's Learning Outcomes?**
- **What opportunities do you provide for children to see the purpose of measurement in their world?**
- **In which ways did the educators support the children to develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating?**
- **In the *Long Jump* learning story, how were the children engaged in their own self assessment? In what ways might this influence how children perceive themselves as learners?**
- **In the *Using sticks to measure in the garden* learning story in what ways did the educator promote children's social responsibility and respect for the environment?**

## **Including Tahlia** **Using the principles and practices of the Early Years Learning Framework**

Tahlia has Spina Bifida and attends kindergarten two half days and one full day each week. She receives eight hours of preschool support per week. A support agency is involved in her care and the kindergarten has *Negotiated Education Plan* meetings with them once a term. Tahlia has a gastro nasal tube for fluids, and on her full day at kindergarten she has an access assist nurse to stay to give her fluid through this tube. Tahlia also has a stoma in her stomach, although at the moment she does not have a urine bag attached to this and her mother is placing pads inside her nappy, which her support worker can change unobtrusively. Tahlia is able to eat solid foods and has an *eating plan* as well as a *care and lifting plan*.

Tahlia can crawl and drag herself around the floor and has a strap to hold her in place when she is sitting on a chair.



### **Challenges for educators and planning for Tahlia**

We are aware that many play experiences were difficult for Tahlia to access. For her to play in the outdoor sandpit we have placed a small tray of sand inside the kindergarten for Tahlia and others to access. We found a table for her wheel chair to fit under and also a sand tray that wasn't too high for her to reach into. We are determined to support Tahlia's access to all the experiences and encourage building relationships with other children and to help her to play and use equipment independently and with others.

### **Educators' practice**

- Appreciation and acceptance of Tahlia's right to learning that is engaging
- The provision of an active learning environment that enables Tahlia to make choices and access play experiences
- Working with the family, other agencies and support workers to develop a consistent plan for her learning and wellbeing
- Being 'risk takers' in thinking, creating and adapting experiences for Tahlia's inclusion
- Being responsive to Tahlia and her family and modelling inclusion



**In what ways does Tahlia's story reveal educators' commitment to the principles and practices of the Framework?**



## The garden and things you may find

### Context

A preschool catering for children aged between 2 and 5 years. We also hold a playgroup program for children aged 12 months to 2 years.

The educators and children spent time talking about what they might like to learn about in the following term. The main ideas that seemed to show through were bugs, slugs, insects, spiders and the garden. The educators suspected this had stemmed from a few of the children recently finding some caterpillars in the garden, which they had kept and been caring for in the classroom aquarium. The children were eager, yet surprisingly patient, to watch if they were going to change into butterflies.

The educators took time over the next few weeks to discover what prior knowledge the children had in regard to the topic. The educators then met to brainstorm and discuss starting points and then designed a program overview based on their ideas and the children's ideas around the garden and things you might find in the garden. They displayed the program for families to look over and gave them opportunities to add their own thoughts, ideas and comments.

### What happened

Cody's mum, Poppy noticed that one of the ideas on the children's program was to plant a vegetable garden. She said she would like to volunteer to help organise this experience and spend time going through the process with the children.

Our director, Rebecca, the educators and the children worked together to make a list of what they thought they would like to plant and what they needed.

Rebecca and an educator took a small group of children to the local hardware and garden store to purchase the items needed and they came back and showed the children.

Together they planted lettuce, carrots, corn, beetroot, beans and herbs. There were lots of conversations amongst the children and choices had to be made about where to plant the vegetables – should all the carrots be together? Would the carrots like to be next to the corn or the beans? Rebecca also talked about how deep and how much room the vegetables and herbs would need to be able to grow.

The children spent time watering the vegetables and herbs and enjoyed looking over what they had achieved. However, some of the children became quite upset when they saw that some children were not using the stepping stones to walk through the garden and were walking on the garden, squashing the newly planted vegies!

A group of children united and decided to make signs to put in the garden showing that there were vegetables planted and everyone had to be careful. Children designed the signs, drew pictures, and displayed them in the garden. The educators assisted their cause by directing children to the stepping stones and also talked with the children during group time about how they could care for the garden.

The children began inquiring about how tall the vegetables and herbs were going to be? How long was it going to take them to grow? When would they be ready to eat? To encourage this thinking one of the educators instigated a growth chart. She helped the children measure the growth of the vegetables and record their findings. Over time they were able to clearly see that the vegetables had grown. Their nurturing was paying off!

After a few weeks, Cody, four and a half years old, noticed that we didn't have any potatoes planted and asked if he could bring in potatoes and onions from his own vegetable garden, so he and his mum could make potato chips and onion rings with the children at the centre.

Cody brought in the potatoes and onions and took time to proudly show off his vegies to his friends. Rebecca and the educators helped the children wash the potatoes, peel the onions and chop them up. The children used olive oil and herbs to season the potatoes and they dusted the onion rings in flour and placed them in the oven. The children all enjoyed the end process of taste testing them.

To continue to extend the children's interest and learning on this topic, the centre applied for a worm farm through a community grant. The children were so excited when it arrived and really took ownership over it. They found out what food scraps the worms liked and didn't like. "The worms don't like onions or garlic, just like me!" said Jack. They continued to place their food scraps in the worm farm on a daily basis.

Together with the educators they turned the soil in the worm farm and after a few weeks they were able to squeeze the juice from the soil and pour it onto the vegetables to help them grow.

To extend on the children's interest, an excursion to the Botanical garden was organised. Once the children arrived at the gardens, they took a 'bugs and slugs' tour to further their understanding of what lives in the garden. They also spent time looking, touching and smelling the variety of plants and trees. They finished off with a picnic lunch in the garden and running races on the lawn. Lots of families volunteered to come along for the excursion and share the experience with the children.

### **Reflection**

What started off as an idea to plant a vegetable garden grew into a long term sustainable project, involving the centre educators, children, families and the wider community.

Educators welcomed and were receptive to the involvement of families. In particular Cody's mum participated in the program and worked collaboratively throughout the project from its inception. It incorporated involvement within the community by going to the local garden shop to purchase requirements, submitting an application for a community grant for the worm farm and organising an excursion to the city botanic gardens.

The inclusion of Cody's suggestion to use vegetables from his own garden in a cooking experience enabled connections between home and the centre. Educators and families also recognised the valuable learning and engagement this brought to the whole group.

As the educators incorporated the children's views and ideas it enabled the program to move with the momentum and direction of the children rather than the children being directed by the program. At different stages educators paused to analyse and reflect on the children's learning, interests and capabilities and to think about their teaching strategies. For example, when children inquired about how long it would take for the vegetables to grow, the educator used this opportunity for intentional teaching by introducing a measuring tool and a growth chart.

### **The collaboration and decision making about assessment for learning**

We could:

- look for other avenues of measurement in our centre – consolidate children's learning about measurement
- build on the environment focus through texts such as *Dinosaurs and all that rubbish*, Jeannie Baker books
- use photos from our excursion so that children can be in charge of how they would like to document their learning.

### Questions and possibilities for my practice

- How do we open our program for parent partnership?
- Whose suggestions do we take up and whose do we ignore?
- How are we listening to and sharing children's ideas - how do we keep responding to children throughout an ongoing project rather than feeling that we have to box children's learning into artificial timeframes?

### Highlighting

- Children's ideas and educators' ideas coming together – children self-directing their learning
- Family participation – family members having the opportunity to shape their child's learning and program
- Educators feeling supported by families
- Children being able to make the link between home and the centre
- Extension of learning

### Linking to the Framework Outcomes

<b>Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Ongoing learning and reflective practice</li> </ul>
<b>Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning environments</li> <li>• Assessment for learning</li> <li>• Responsiveness to children</li> <li>• Holistic approaches</li> <li>• Intentional teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are connected to and contribute to their world</li> <li>• Children are confident and involved learners</li> <li>• Children are effective communicators</li> </ul>

### Recording our story



**September – starting to plant the veggie garden, deciding where to plant them**



**Putting in the stakes for the tomatoes and beans to climb**



***Planting some beans***



***Talking with the children about the roots and how much room they will need***



***Children planting together***



***Watering the beans***



***Measuring the growth of the veggies after two weeks***



***Cody showing off his home grown onions and potatoes with other children***



***Washing the potatoes from Cody's garden***



***Carefully chopping the potatoes ready to be cooked***



***Eating the delicious potato chips and onion rings***



***The arrival of the worm farm***



***November – pouring the worm juice over the veggie garden***

## The wonders of clay

Recently we offered children clay. As this was a new material to explore, we created a space on the veranda that would give children time and freedom to encounter it. – **Learning environments.**

Our discoveries about the wonders of clay demonstrate the integrated and complex nature of children's learning and educators' pedagogical practice across **Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners**



**Lifting and transporting** - understanding how weights differ, giving attention to the steps we need before lifting pieces of different size and volume.

**Children** develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating - they apply a wide range of thinking strategies to engage with situations and solve problems, and adapt these strategies to new situations.

**Educators** recognise mathematical understandings that children bring to learning and build on these in ways that are relevant to each child.



**Scratching and touching** – concentrating on the prints we leave behind, how we make them and how we can transform them

**Children** resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials – they use their senses to explore natural and built environments and manipulate resources to investigate, take apart, assemble, invent and construct.

**Educators** provide sensory and exploratory experiences with natural and processed materials.



***Understanding balance and equilibrium – feeling the cold on our feet from another perspective***

**Children** develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity - they use play to investigate, imagine and explore.

**Educators** respond to children's displays of learning dispositions by commenting on them and providing encouragement and additional ideas.



***Pressing, pointing and slapping – making an impact on plain surfaces, searching for new properties in the material such as how malleable it can be or the sounds that can be made***

**Children** resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials – they manipulate objects and experiment with cause and effect, trial and error, and motion.

**Educators** model mathematical and scientific language and language associated with the arts.



***Building – remembering and reinventing a story once made with blocks – extending upon previous learning by having time, and clay available in ever bigger quantities, without interruption***

**Children** transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another – they make connections between experiences, concepts and processes and try out strategies that were effective to solve problems in one situation in a new context.

**Educators** value signs of children applying their learning in new ways and talk about this with them in ways that grow their understanding.



***Sharing with friends and educators – experiencing a sense of community and belonging, being listened to and respected, learning to be empathetic and care for each other***

**Children** resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials – they engage in learning relationships and experience the benefits and pleasures of shared learning exploration.

**Educators** provide opportunities and support for children to engage in meaningful learning relationships.



## Veggie Soup and Chocolate Cake

Toby, Fred, Flynn and Zachary found a quiet sunny place on the platform and started to “cook”. Zachary mixed mud and water carefully. “I’m making soup,” he said. He counted out spoonfuls of sand. “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, here’s some more milk!” Zachary stirred. “Oooo..it’s turning into mud.”

After a while he declared that it was done and it was time to cook it. Fred had the job of bringing sand back and forth from the sandpit. He shared it out with all the cooks. Toby was mixing sand and water in the teapot. “I’ll just put it in the microwave” he said, struggling to open the door without spilling a drop.

Toby moved over to Zachary’s spot and started to pour sand into the bowl. “No, Stop!” shouted Zachary. Toby kept pouring and Zachary grabbed Toby’s arm to stop him. Toby ran off, returning a few moments later and started his own cooking mixture.

Flynn was cooking too. “He’s (Toby) making soup and I’m making the chocolate cake,” explained Flynn. Zachary popped out from behind some bushes and added green bits to Toby’s soup. “Look at all the vegetables!” said Toby. “What vegetables can be green?” “Peas.” Flynn suggested “Leaves.” Toby explained: “Leaves are not vegetables. Some trees can have nuts what people can eat and fruit.”

Fred was at the stove turning all the buttons. “We need some heat,” he told the boys. Toby managed to fit his whole bucket of soup in the microwave. He scooped some mud from the side garden and brought it to Flynn. “I’m just getting some more veggies for you,” Toby explained. Flynn found the cutlery tray. “We need some plates to serve out. How many people are there? 1, 2, 3, 4 people so we need four plates.”

Flynn set the table and served little amounts of his chocolate cake onto each plate. “I’m putting it out and then I’ll put it in the fridge to warm and then you can eat it.”



### Linking to the Framework Outcomes

<b>Principles</b>	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships. Educators have created environments and relationships to support children's development of skills and understanding to interact positively with each other and value collaboration.
<b>Practice</b>	This story demonstrates that play has provided opportunities for the boys to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. They have tested out ideas and challenged each other's thinking in a supportive environment.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Outcome 1: children have a strong sense of identity Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

#### Short term review

Zachary, you enjoyed the sloppiness of the mud and water and sharing this game in the sun with your friends.

You were good at using your words when Toby did something you weren't happy about.

It is good to see you look out for your own needs in an appropriate way. Well done, Zachary.

#### What next?

Zachary's effort in dealing with a problem shows how much he has matured socially in recent months. He is respected by other children and often takes on leadership roles in the play. We will continue to provide him with opportunities for dramatic play where he can continue to develop his social skills.

## Garden Project

Our garden project began when a group of children were drawing flowers on chalk boards. We enquired about where they had seen flowers and discovered a lot about what they already knew. "In my garden" Ella responded, "Nanny has pretty flowers," Laini responded. "I have vegetables in my garden," Ebony added. "Me too" said Ella.

Our discussion continued on through the afternoon. We talked a lot about vegetables and this led to thinking about growing some vegetables of our own. Through our research we discovered that vegetables grow from seeds. We also learnt about what vegetables need to grow.

The children decided we needed to plant some seeds too. Over the following weeks they watered and cared for them as part of our daily routine. Together we watched the plants grow and at the same time we noticed the *children's appreciation for the natural environment* evolve. Most excitingly, the children have been harvesting the crops and taking them to the kitchen to be used in our lunches.



**Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world**  
***Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment – they show growing appreciation and care for natural environments***

**In what ways did the educator promote children's social responsibility and respect for the environment?**

**What teaching strategies did the educator use to engage the children in the learning process?**

**What is the value of engaging children in ongoing projects?**

## Welcome to the Animal Ark

Evie and Matt were building a home for their moose. The moose were using their horns to push the blocks along. Matt said: "And they even use them to scare predators away." Holly approached with her tiger and two lions. "Excuse me, but may we stay with you?" asked Holly's animals. Matt replied: "Yes – but only you can not eat us."



Seth came over with three elephants and asked to sleep there. "No you can't even sleep here cause you got too many animals and our home is not wide enough," explained Matt. Evie suggested; "Maybe you can build your own house".



Seth took his elephants and did just that. Esther's tiger jumped up on top of the building and Matt noticed that it was a Bengal Tiger. "This is the water right here" said Evie pointing to an area of carpet. "And this is dry land" added Matt. "Pretend that baby bear fell down and my tiger jumped down to save it." (Holly) Evie suggested to the tiger "Maybe you can be a guard". "To protect us from baddies" (Matt) "Thank you so much guys for letting me stay here. My mummy and daddy (lions) can sleep with me sometimes can't they?" said the Bengal tiger.



The animals played together in and around the house. Matt observed "You know what ...we are the plant eaters and you are a meat eater". Giraffes and zebras moved into the house too. The children worked out a system together for opening the vertical doors to let animals in and out, only closing them when the rain came. Evie arrived at the door with brown bear and panda in her hands. "Skooz me. Skooz me. Can we get in? Cause we don't like water at all. It's freezing so we want to get inside." (She was using a special bear like voice of course.) The doors were opened to let them in. Evie said in her grandest voice "Welcome everybody! Welcome to Noah's Ark. No, it's actually the Animal Ark." So the house became a boat.



Later Evie and Matt built an extra house nearby. “Tell your mum and dad you can have dinner over here tonight,” called Evie’s moose to Holly’s tiger.

### **Short term review**

Evie, you worked so well with Holly and Matt in this game. You were clever to use different voices for your animals and were really able to put yourself ‘in their skin’, even inviting a Bengal tiger over to dinner! Your imagination and language skills are wonderful Evie.

Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Children are effective communicators - uses language and engages in play to imagine and create roles, scripts and ideas.

### **What next**

Great to see Matt and Evie incorporating others into their games. Evie’s play is very language based and so Holly is a good companion for her. We will try to foster this friendship further, to broaden Evie’s social group.

**What information collected by the educators would contribute to assessment for learning?**

**What evidence does this learning story reveal about how the children are becoming effective communicators? How could an educator use this evidence?**

