



Assessment for learning

As an integral part of the planning cycle, assessment **FOR** learning deserves our close attention.

The Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for school Aged Care identifies the *“process of gathering and analysing information as evidence of what children know, can do and understand.”* (DEEWR 2009 & DEEWR 2011)

National Quality Standards recommends that educators are to use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret information to assess children’s learning and wellbeing (ACECQA 2011, p. 40). This acknowledges that children demonstrate their learning in differing ways.

So what does this really mean for educator practice?

Historically, assessment processes across Australian education have had a deficit view children’s learning. Various tools have been used to assess what children don’t know and can’t do. They have often focused on content, concepts or knowledge. The learning frameworks (MTOF and EYLF) broaden the definition of assessment to include the evaluation of children’s learning and wellbeing. This assessment is actually focused on what children can do rather than what they can’t. The processes of assessment and evaluation need to support educators in noticing children’s learning using this in further planning. This should be based on children’s strengths, interests and passions which is necessary to set children on the path for successful learning throughout life.

“Approaches to assessment that are culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive to the physical and intellectual capabilities of each child will acknowledge each child’s abilities and strengths, and allow them to demonstrate competence.” Pg 17 EYLF

The frameworks also point educators to consider the role of families and the children in the assessment process. In this way the process is more inclusive and considerate of the whole child.

The learning frameworks (DEEWR 2009 & DEEWR 2011) engage educators in true reflection on their values, attitudes and beliefs about children and how they learn to identify strengths, interests and passions in support of authentic planning. The National Quality Standards (ACECQA 2011) engages educators in reflecting on their own professional knowledge, skills and experience in evaluating the effectiveness of their actions and decision making.

A reflective educator who understands the theory and beliefs which inform their practice are more likely to view children’s play from a strength based perspective and be able to identify the learning in front of them.

Questions for reflection

How do we currently document and plan for children’s learning?

How can we improve the quality of information we provide to families about their children’s learning, development and participation in the program?

What do we do to critically reflect on and evaluate the program, how is this documented and how are our evaluations used to make informed curriculum decisions to improve outcomes for children? (ACECQA 2011, p. 40)

Are we assessing **FOR** learning?



Professional Development with Gowrie SA

To support educators in critiquing and analysing their existing processes for assessment and evaluation of children's learning Gowrie SA have the following opportunities for professional learning.

Demonstrate the Cycle of Planning during assessment

For participants to be able to follow the recognised planning cycle, document it and demonstrate it during assessment. To understand the importance of each step of the planning cycle and identify ways to document and demonstrate this for each child.

Meaningful observations: notice, recognise, respond

Learners will have the opportunity to explore the Learning Frameworks to help build on their current understandings of assessment in the Early Years.

Learners will think about their current planning process and build on this using the three filters notice, recognise and respond based on Margret Carr's work.

Holistic planning: capturing the uniqueness of the child

How can educators engage in a genuine way to ensure "each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program." (ACECQA 2011, Guide to the National Quality standard, p.20)

Learning stories: unpacking the myths

Explore the Learning Stories format and how an educator's reflective practice can support children's learning through an effective assessment, documentation and planning cycle.

References

Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) 2009, *Belonging, being and becoming, the early years learning framework for Australia*, Council of Australian Governments, Canberra.

Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) 2011, *My time our place framework for school aged care in Australia*, Council of Australian Governments, Canberra.

Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) 2009, *The National Quality Standards*, Council of Australian Governments, Canberra.

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