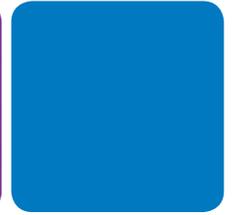




## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



## Talking about practice: Revising a Service Philosophy

**A CONVERSATION WITH JANE ARNETT AND SHELLI GIOSI  
FROM EAST BRUNSWICK KINDERGARTEN AND CHILD  
CARE CENTRE**

This video is part of ECA's 'Talking about practice' series (TAPS), designed to support discussion and reflection on the *National Quality Standard* (NQS) and the links with the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF). The series is intended to support lively conversations and discussions between educators as they reflect on their practice and identify 'what next?' actions as a result of their discussions.

The video is in three parts and includes footage of practice that illustrates parts of the interview.



### Introduction

In the Guide to the NQS in Quality Area 7 Leadership and Management, Element 7.2.1, it says that 'A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operation' (NQS, p.181). Many education and care services are in the process of revising their philosophy statement as part of engaging with the NQS. In this TAPS conversation, educators from a community owned kindergarten and child care centre, talk about the collaborative process they used to revise their service philosophy.

Before watching this video, it might be helpful to have copies of your service philosophy available for the participants so that they can refer to or make links with it in the discussion.

Each segment has questions to guide your thinking and discussion about the video, but remember that you can develop your own questions to suit the people and the place where you work. An important part of using the TAPS videos is to plan and take action based on your discussion.

One small action or step can be the beginning of more significant changes.

Reflecting on and revising your service philosophy is an opportunity to:

- think deeply about your values and beliefs related to education and care programs and what you believe is important for children and families
- collaborate with all the people involved in your service including management, educators, support staff, families and children
- identify the special or unique features of your service and what you provide in partnership with children, families and community
- strengthen the connections between your service philosophy, NQS and the EYLF or other approved early learning framework.

### Segment 1: What is a statement of philosophy? Why is it important?

You could begin by asking these two questions before you show the first segment of the video. Note the responses and later compare these with the TAPS conversation about 'what is a statement of philosophy?' and 'why is it important?' Were there similarities and/or points of difference between your responses to these questions and the responses of the two educators in the video?

Shelli suggests that the philosophy reflects her centre's 'particular personality'. What does she mean by this?

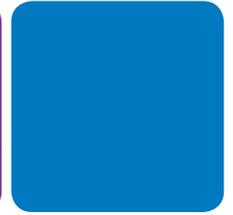
Reflect on each of the points that are made about the importance of a philosophy statement and compare them with your philosophy. For example, in your philosophy:

- are the unique features or attributes of the centre or service identified?
- does your philosophy statement reflect the key things you want to promote or provide in partnership with children and families?
- can you identify your centre's 'personality' in your philosophy?





## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



Jane makes the point that because they have a number of part time staff in the centre working on different days and across the rooms, their philosophy statement helps to ensure every staff member has a shared understanding of their commitment to work respectfully with every child and family.

*How can a service philosophy support shared goals and commitments to children and families in guiding educators' practice every day?*

Watch the first footage of arrival time at the centre. Can you identify how the centre's philosophical commitment to building respectful relationships with families and children is practised? For example, the philosophy is enacted or practised when educators greet families and children individually on their arrival. What else indicates that this centre values respectful relationships with families and children?

*If you took a video of arrival times in your centre what would be the key features and do they reflect statements or commitments in your philosophy?*

Some of the features of respectful relationships with families and children that are evident in the footage include:

- individualised, friendly greetings for each family and child
- a sense of unhurriedness
- a warm welcome and time for conversation
- physical and verbal support for individual children or parents who are feeling unsure or hesitant on arrival
- siblings and parents are invited to stay and spend time in the rooms
- the environment is prepared and inviting.

*Why are these arrival practices important? What messages do they convey to families and children or other visitors to the centre?*

### Segment 2: The process of revising a service philosophy statement

In the second segment of this TAPS conversation, the focus is on the process that this centre used to revise their philosophy. The centre's previous philosophy was a one paragraph statement with some additional documents that explained the statement in more detail. As Shelli indicates, the accompanying documents had been overlooked over time, which meant the centre relied on one paragraph to identify their values and beliefs and to guide the educators' work.

Discuss the different processes or steps that this centre used to support the revision. Are the steps similar or different from ones you have used? What are the challenges with any of these steps or actions? Can you identify solutions that would help you to use a similar process? Who or what might help you?

The process of revising the philosophy for this centre involved different stages and actions. All the discussion and feedback was documented and collated.

Educators began the process by reflecting on the existing philosophy and identifying its positive and negative aspects. This discussion was central to their engagement with the NQS and the development of their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

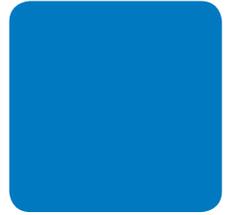
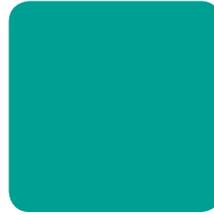
Further discussion was held with the committee of management who decided to allocate some additional paid staff time to the revision process (approximately 1–2 hours per week for a staff member who had been on leave).

Families and educators were sent a letter about the revision process and invited to add their ideas about what they wanted to include in the new philosophy. They were invited to contribute words, paragraphs or statements.





## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



Children were asked 'what they liked about the centre.' Their views included reference to particular items of equipment or to specific educators and to experiences they enjoyed.

When all the discussion and feedback was collated, an external consultant met with the educators to help them decide how to frame or format the philosophy and to identify the key values and beliefs that had emerged from collaboration with all those involved.

The draft revised philosophy was then taken back to educators, the committee and families for further comment and feedback.

In the second piece of footage from the centre we see children, parents and educators engaged in one 'real' and one imaginary cooking experience. When discussing this footage try to keep the focus on the topic of revising a service philosophy by using these or other focus questions.

*Can you identify who are the parents and who are the educators? Why is this difficult and what does it tell us?*

*How does this footage link with the centre's commitment to using intentional teaching to support children's progress as learners and to using integrated approaches in their teaching and learning?*

*What aspect of your program would you like to capture on video to show families, children, educators, management and support staff how your practice reflects and is guided by your philosophy?*

### Segment 3: Philosophical commitments

In the final segment of this TAPS, Jane and Shelli discuss some of the particular commitments they have included in their revised philosophy as well as one of the unresolved issues.

The educators with the committee's support decided that Early Childhood Australia's *Code of Ethics* (2006) provided a suitable frame or format for their revised philosophy. They collated all the commitments or statements based on their values and beliefs under five headings:

1. Commitments to children
2. Commitments to families
3. Commitments to educators
4. Commitments to programs
5. Commitments to the environment.

This means that the document is more than the previous one paragraph document.

*Why do Jane and Shelli believe their revised philosophy is more helpful in guiding educators' work than the previous short version? Do you agree or disagree with their position? Why?*

*What are the benefits and challenges with having a long or short philosophical statement?*

*How could you use the ECA Code of Ethics to guide revising your philosophy?*

*How might the above commitment headings link with the NQS and the EYLF?*

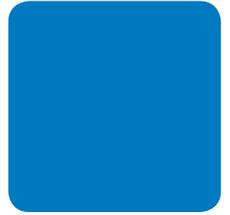
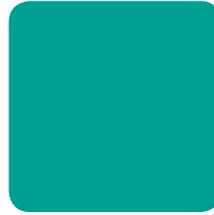
Jane and Shelli also discuss one aspect of the revision which was not resolved when this TAPS interview was filmed. The revised philosophy has a commitment statement about respecting and valuing cultural influences and differences and exploring these within the program. Some of the educators wanted to include an additional commitment that specifically mentions valuing and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Others argued that this is not necessary because they believe that the commitment to respect for cultural diversity is inclusive of all cultures including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

*What is your response to these two positions? What might be the benefits of having a commitment which is specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures? What are the risks in doing this?*





## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



The discussion on this important issue is a good example of critical reflection, where different perspectives are sought and respected and discussion is not 'shut down' because there is a difference of opinion. The decision that all educators will attend a focused professional development session on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their programs is a deliberate step that could help the educators to come to a shared decision on this issue.

In summing up this discussion, the facilitator identifies three factors that were important for supporting the process of revising the philosophy in this centre:

1. Allowing plenty of time for the process and collaboration to take place
2. Leadership
3. Commitment from all involved.

### *Are there other factors from your experience that can help to support revising a service philosophy?*

Identify all the ways your philosophy is used to guide and inform practice and to ensure shared understandings and commitments. For example, some centres use their philosophy when recruiting new staff or when orienting students into the centre.

The final video footage has a focus on the environment which is one of the five 'big' value commitments in the centre's revised philosophy.

### *What are the features of the environment?*

*How does the environment reflect the centre's commitment to create an environment that is 'aesthetically pleasing' and which 'plays a vital role in supporting children's learning' and in using 'recycled and natural materials'?*

*Does your philosophy help to guide or inform how the educators plan for the environment and its role in supporting learning? Could this be strengthened?*

*Does your service philosophy reflect 'a shared understanding of the role of the service with children, families and the community?' (Guide to the NQS, p. 181). What processes or strategies did you use to ensure children, families and the community were involved in the development or revision of your philosophy?*

*What action or small step/s will you take in response to the discussion and reflection on the questions, footage and conversation in this TAPS?*

### References and resources

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2011). *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. Sydney: ACECQA [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au).

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