

Addendum to the Early Years Learning Framework – for use during COVID-19



This document has been developed to draw out the key areas of the EYLF Principles and Practices to support teaching and learning during COVID-19. It is not intended to replace, but rather offer advice and support in the current situation. Educators can use this document to support their ways of working in this current time.

PRINCIPLES

Principles	Practicalities
<p>1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships</p> <p>Educators who are attuned to children’s thoughts and feelings, support the development of a strong sense of wellbeing. They positively interact with the young child in their learning.</p> <p>Research has shown that babies are both vulnerable and competent. Babies’ first attachments within their families and within other trusting relationships provide them with a secure base for exploration and learning.</p> <p>Through a widening network of secure relationships, children develop confidence and feel respected and valued. They become increasingly able to recognise and respect the feelings of others and to interact positively with them.</p> <p>Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support can assist children to develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others. They also help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork.</p>	<p>1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships</p> <p>Key educator groups are maintained as much as possible to ensure positive relationships that support children’s well-being and a sense of belonging. If a new key educator is introduced, the parents of the child are informed and are given information about the new key educator. The key educator is given information about their key child and family, including the most recent summative assessments.</p> <p>Rooms are kept as consistent as possible with children remaining in their group rooms with consistent educators. This practice nurtures secure relationships and provides consistent emotional support.</p>
<p>2. Partnerships</p> <p>Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families. Educators recognise that families are children’s first and most influential teachers. They create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful.</p> <p>Partnerships are based on the foundations of understanding each other’s expectations and attitudes and build on the strength of each other’s knowledge.</p> <p>In genuine partnerships, families and early childhood educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • value each other’s knowledge of each child • value each other’s contributions to and roles in each child’s life • trust each other • communicate freely and respectfully with each other 	<p>2. Partnerships</p> <p>Communication with families/ carers are maintained through Storypark, with an additional layer of high-level relevant communication provided at pick up and drop off via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notices and noticeboards. • check in with key educator. <p>Communication includes ongoing information about the child’s health, learning and wellbeing.</p> <p>Educators are mindful of families’ concerns and respond with empathy and understanding, being aware that families may want to spend longer speaking to them about their child to feel reassured.</p>

- share insights and perspectives about each child
- engage in shared decision-making.

Partnerships also involve educators, families and support professionals working together to explore the learning potential in every day events, routines and play so that children with additional needs are provided with daily opportunities to learn from active participation and engagement in these experiences in the home and in early childhood or specialist settings.

3. High expectations and equity

Early childhood educators who are committed to equity believe in all children's capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their parents and educators hold high expectations for their achievement in learning.

Educators recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success. In response they challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, other services and agencies, they continually strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes.

4. Respect for diversity

There are many ways of living, being and of knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children's different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families' home lives.

Educators recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society and provides a valid evidence base about ways of knowing. For Australia it also includes promoting greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.

When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners. They make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued, and respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives.

Educators think critically about opportunities and dilemmas that can arise from diversity and take action to redress unfairness. They provide opportunities to learn about similarities and difference and about interdependence and how we can learn to live together.

3. High expectations and equity

Children's learning and development continues to be a priority.

Educators continue to hold high expectations for children and use the planning cycle, as appropriate to ensure children are provided with relevant experiences to support their ongoing learning and development.

4. Respect for diversity

Families bring to the centre diverse perspectives about the COVID-19 situation. Educators are respectful and provide families with opportunities to share issues and concerns in a professional manner.

Educators are reminded of the ECA Code of Ethics when working with families, children and colleagues (see <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ECA-COE-Brochure-web-2019.pdf>).

5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

Educators continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and develop learning communities. They become co-learners with children, families and community, and value the continuity and richness of local knowledge shared by community members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, early childhood educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions, developing more specific questions for particular areas of enquiry.

Overarching questions to guide reflection include:

- What are my understandings of each child?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do?
- Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice?

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.

5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

Educators are up to date with and receive time to complete relevant training to assist them in the understanding of COVID-19, including but not limited to the Australian Government Department of Health COVID-19 infection control training.

Educators reflect daily as individuals and with staff teams around learning opportunities for children that have been altered in the current COVID-19 situation including considerations of:

- how learning has occurred in an environment that allows for children to be distanced without being uncomfortable.
- further possibilities for the environment to promote small group learning with safe distancing measures.
- any necessary changes to the learning environment.
- how family voices are valued and included in the program.
- adaptations/ modifications that can be shared more broadly with centre teams.

PRACTICES

Principles	Practicalities
<p>1. Holistic approaches</p> <p>Holistic approaches to teaching and learning recognise the connectedness of mind, body and spirit⁴. When early childhood educators take a holistic approach, they pay attention to children’s physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning. While educators may plan or assess with a focus on a particular outcome or component of learning, they see children’s learning as integrated and interconnected. They recognise the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning. They see learning as a social activity and value collaborative learning and community participation.</p> <p>An integrated, holistic approach to teaching and learning also focuses on connections to the natural world. Educators foster children’s capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.</p>	<p>1. Holistic approaches</p> <p>Learning is still regarded as a social activity however considerations are put in place to enable social distancing (see learning environments).</p> <p>Educators take a holistic approach, focusing on various aspects of children’s learning, development and wellbeing attuned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• conversations and acknowledgment about our current world. Implications for ongoing planning are identified and incorporated into the planning cycle.• regression in milestones and/or changes in behaviour. Educators engage in ongoing conversations with families to monitor changes and follow up support services are identified if needed.
<p>2. Responsiveness to children</p> <p>Educators are responsive to all children’s strengths, abilities and interests. They value and build on children’s strengths, skills and knowledge to ensure their motivation and engagement in learning. They respond to children’s expertise, cultural traditions and ways of knowing, the multiple languages spoken by some children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the strategies used by children with additional needs to negotiate their everyday lives.</p> <p>Educators are also responsive to children’s ideas and play, which form an important basis for curriculum decision-making. In response to children’s evolving ideas and interests, educators assess, anticipate and extend children’s learning via open ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning. They make use of spontaneous ‘teachable moments’ to scaffold children’s learning.</p> <p>Responsive learning relationships are strengthened as educators and children learn together and share decisions, respect and trust. Responsiveness enables educators to respectfully enter children’s play and ongoing projects, stimulate their thinking and enrich their learning.</p> <p>Examples of how educators can reflect on their practice can be found in the description of the Learning Outcomes.</p>	<p>2. Responsiveness to children</p> <p>Educators are measured in their spontaneous responses to children, particularly with including/adding to resourcing for play to scaffold learning. Considerations are given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the number of resources available for all children.• whether the additional resourcing will appeal to all children and create situations of ‘crowding’.• possibilities of being able to sanitise additional items.• Educators reflect on possibilities during and at the end of each day and re-introduce provocations when the child next attends the centre in order to build upon their learning.

(continued over)

3. Learning through play

Play provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. When children play with other children they create social groups, test out ideas, challenge each other's thinking and build new understandings. Play provides a supportive environment where children can ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Play can expand children's thinking and enhance their desire to know and to learn. In these ways play can promote positive dispositions towards learning. Children's immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy being.

Early childhood educators take on many roles in play with children and use a range of strategies to support learning. They engage in sustained shared conversations with children to extend their thinking. They provide a balance between child led, child initiated, and educator supported learning. They create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct. Educators interact with babies and children to build attachment. They use routines and play experiences to do this. They also recognise spontaneous teachable moments as they occur and use them to build on children's learning. Early childhood educators work with young children to promote and model positive ways to relate to others. They actively support the inclusion of all children in play, help children to recognise when play is unfair and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.

4. Intentional teaching

Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful.

Educators who engage in intentional teaching recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning. They actively promote children's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills. They use strategies such as modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking and problem solving to extend children's thinking and learning. Educators move flexibly in and out of different roles and draw on different strategies as the context changes. They plan opportunities for intentional teaching and knowledge-building. They document and monitor children's learning.

3. Learning through play

Age appropriate routines and play experiences are core to teaching children hand washing techniques, nose blowing and coughing etiquette. Educators and children work together to invent alternate contact support rather than hugging i.e. dances, elbow taps etc.

- Conversations instigated by educators prompt reminders and questions elicit comprehension.
- Less mobile children have set routines for these procedures that are enacted by key educators at defined times. These become familiar routine play experiences (see also responsiveness to children).

4. Intentional teaching

Intentional teaching in the planning cycle should involve both small group adult-facilitated play experiences and small group independent play experiences. For younger children, these adult-facilitated experiences should include learning during increased personal hygiene moments.

Educators are intentional in the presentation of the environment, resourcing materials and grouping of children to facilitate small group learning.

- Learning areas continue to be offered with modifications to the number of children involved and the space needed for each experience.
- Children working with materials/resources are encouraged to work with their own sets of play materials where appropriate – supporting their conceptual understanding of “things that belong together” as an extension of the mathematical concept on grouping/categorising.

A visual schedule of the day is created (where possible) with children to identify any changes to routines and ensure children feel a sense of agency over changes.

5. Learning environments

Learning environments are welcoming spaces when they reflect and enrich the lives and identities of children and families participating in the setting and respond to their interests and needs. Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. They cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and invite children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions.

Outdoor learning spaces are a feature of Australian learning environments. They offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors. Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education.

Indoor and outdoor environments support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, early childhood educators, families and the broader community. They promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning.

Materials enhance learning when they reflect what is natural and familiar and also introduce novelty to provoke interest and more complex and increasingly abstract thinking. For example, digital technologies can enable children to access global connections and resources and encourage new ways of thinking. Environments and resources can also highlight our responsibilities for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment. They can foster hope, wonder and knowledge about the natural world.

Educators can encourage children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions to the learning environment. They can support engagement by allowing time for meaningful interactions, by providing a range of opportunities for individual and shared experiences, and by finding opportunities for children to go into and contribute to their local community.

6. Cultural competence

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. This is evident in everyday practice when educators demonstrate an ongoing commitment to developing their own cultural competence in a two-way process with families and communities.

Educators view culture and the context of family as central to children's sense of being and belonging, and to success in lifelong learning. Educators also seek to promote children's cultural competence.

5. Learning environments

Environments are constructed so they support learning and connections, whilst supporting distancing:

- Awareness of babies who are rolling: they are placed so that touching of others is minimised when rolling.
- There are as many resources offered as there are children in a room. Toddlers are provided with small baskets for construction/ manipulative toys, that include the same resources to reduce sharing.
- Children in the same spaces are encouraged to sit in defined spaces. These are marked in each area of learning, for example by shapes/colours on the ground that are aligned to a particular child, chairs set in areas to define numbers of children, tables used to distance children at table top activities (e.g. two tables pushed together, and children sat across from each other)

Programs are fixed and children only move outside in key educator groups rotated throughout the day to reduce numbers gathered in larger groups.

The outdoor is offered to room cohorts rather than a flexible program whereby children move in and out. Opportunities for experiences on verandas provide a balance of large muscle play and sand play.

All aspects of a child's wellbeing are considered, and educators work as a team to adapt environments for children.

- reduced numbers in rooms means that physically active play can be available indoors, obstacle courses, climbing equipment can be used indoors to allow children opportunity for physically active play at a time when another group of children are using the playground.
- chairs are placed at learning experiences to define how many children the area for learning has been defined for. It also assists with spacing of children: resources are placed at close proximity and all children have access to the same resources. Sharing is not recommended.

Children do not go into communities for excursions at this time.

6. Cultural competence

Educators speak frequently with parents about children's knowledge of COVID-19. They are aware of parent's perspectives and current situations that might impact the child. Educators share information about the children's days and any follow up about COVID-19 discussions.

Educators use social stories on a regular basis to assist children in understanding the current situation and to support any conversations about where their friends might be (in instances where only children from emergency services' families are attending the centre) and why parents/ close family members are absent for great periods due to work and isolation periods.

Cultural competence is much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence encompasses:

- being aware of one's own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.

7. Continuity of learning and transitions

Children bring family and community ways of being, belonging 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.

Transitions, including from home to early childhood settings, between settings, and from early childhood settings to school, offer opportunities and challenges. Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations and ways of doing things. Building on children's prior and current experiences helps them to feel secure, confident and connected to familiar people, places, events and understandings. Children, families and early childhood educators all contribute to successful transitions between settings.

In partnership with families, early childhood educators ensure that children have an active role in preparing for transitions. They assist children to understand the traditions, routines and practices of the settings to which they are moving and to feel comfortable with the process of change.

Early childhood educators also help children to negotiate changes in their status or identities, especially when they begin full-time school. As children make transitions to new settings (including school) educators from early childhood settings and schools commit to sharing information about each child's knowledge and skills so learning can build on foundations of earlier learning. Educators work collaboratively with each child's new educator and other professionals to ensure a successful transition.

8. Assessment for learning

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.

It is important because it enables educators in partnership with families, children and other professionals to:

7. Continuity of learning and transitions

Throughout the day become explicit opportunities for hand washing and sanitising areas where children are playing. Children engage in hand washing songs that meet the required 20 seconds. These happen in blocks of time throughout the day:

- on arrival
- before and after meals
- throughout the day; the routine of the day is broken into modules of time that provide small groups involving co construction of knowledge and sustained shared thinking that key educators facilitate.
- prior to leaving the centre.

Children feel safe and secure as they are provided where possible with consistent educators in their room.

Where appropriate, children are involved in the renegotiation of expectations for group, supported with signs and drawings that involve children (eg, ways we treat each other, using and replacing resources, social distancing using chairs, coughing, sneezing, greetings and departures). This is established to create a sense of belonging. Where possible, these negotiated group norms become centre wide for consistency for all children.

8. Assessment for learning

Children's learning and development continues to be a priority.

Attention is drawn to reflecting on ..."pedagogy - teaching and learning that will suit the context and these children" ensuring that children, families and educators know that learning opportunities are provided in a revised manner that is thoughtful, considered, respectful and contextually relevant to the current COVID-19 situation.

- plan effectively for children's current and future learning
- communicate about children's learning and progress
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing toward realising learning outcomes and if not, what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular learning outcomes, providing that support or assisting families to access specialist help
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered and the approaches taken to enable children's learning
- reflect on pedagogy that will suit this context and these children.

Educators use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's learning. They search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings. More recent approaches to assessment also examine the learning strategies that children use and reflect ways in which learning is co-constructed through interactions between the educator and each child. Used effectively, these approaches to assessment become powerful ways to make the process of learning visible to children and their families, educators and other professionals.

The five Learning Outcomes in this Framework, as outlined later, provide early childhood educators with key reference points against which children's progress can be identified, documented and communicated to families, other early childhood professionals and educators in schools. Over time educators can reflect on how children have developed, how they have engaged with increasingly complex ideas and participated in increasingly sophisticated learning experiences.

Ongoing assessment processes that include a diverse array of methods capture and validate the different pathways that children take toward achieving these outcomes. Such processes do not focus exclusively on the endpoints of children's learning; they give equal consideration to the 'distance-travelled' by individual children and recognise and celebrate not only the giant leaps that children take in their learning but the small steps as well.

All children demonstrate their learning in different ways. 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.

Including children, families and other professionals in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate assessment processes allows for new understandings to emerge that are

not possible if educators rely solely on their own strategies and perspectives. Developing inclusive assessment practices with children and their families demonstrates respect for diversity, helps educators make better sense of what they have observed and supports learning for both children and adults.

Assessment, when undertaken in collaboration with families, can assist families to support children's learning and empower them to act on behalf of their children beyond the early childhood setting. When children are included in the assessment process they can develop an understanding of themselves as learners and an understanding of how they learn best.

When educators reflect on their role in children's learning and assessment they reflect on their own views and understandings of early childhood theory, research and practice to focus on:

- the experiences and environments they provide and how that links to the intended learning outcomes
- the extent to which they know and value the culturally specific knowledge about children and learning that is embedded within the community in which they are working
- each child's learning in the context of their families, drawing family perspectives, understandings, experiences and expectations
- the learning opportunities which build on what children already know and what they bring to the early childhood setting
- evidence that the learning experiences offered are inclusive of all children and culturally appropriate
- not making assumptions about children's learning or setting lower expectations for some children because of unacknowledged biases
- incorporating pedagogical practices that reflect knowledge of diverse perspectives and contribute to children's wellbeing and successful learning
- whether there are sufficiently challenging experiences for all children
- the evidence that demonstrates children are learning
- how they can expand the range of ways they assess to make assessment richer and more useful.