CHCECE024
Design and implement the curriculum to foster children's learning and development

Learner guide

One World for Children Pty Ltd

Aspire learning resources

CHCECE024

Design and implement the curriculum to foster children's learning and development

Release 2

Learner guide

Aspire Version 2.1

Aspire learning resources

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CHCECE024 Design and implement the curriculum to foster children's learning and development, Release 2

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407–411 Thompson Road
NORTH GEELONG VIC 3215 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 5272 2714
www.owfc.com.au

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Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE024 Design and implement the curriculum to foster children's learning and development,* Release 2. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	▶ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into practice. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	▶ Where QR codes appear, you can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summaries	▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	▶ There are learning checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

1A Creating a valuable learning environment

1B Evaluating and modifying the learning environment

Developing appropriate settings and environments

When setting up an experience or activity, it is vital that you do so in a way that invites children to engage with the learning environment. The learning environment needs to be clean, well-organised and appropriately resourced. It should also be inviting and aesthetically pleasing.

You also need to cater for the child's desire to participate. This is achieved by providing opportunities that relate to the interests of all children.

Indoor and outdoor environments should offer children opportunities to explore, develop and grow while working with or alongside other children and educators.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
✓	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

1A Creating a valuable learning environment

Learning occurs in many ways. Experiences, activities and resources are important, as are the ways you interact with and encourage children in the learning environment. Once established, the learning environment needs to be evaluated and modified to ensure that it supports all aspects of children's learning.

A welcoming learning environment:
▶ reflects the identities of those who use it
▶ supports interests, abilities and learning
▶ is vibrant and flexible
▶ offers a range of activities
▶ reflects the ideas and interests of families.

Standards and frameworks

The design and implementation of a curriculum and environment that fosters children's learning and development should be guided by the following:

- *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) and/or *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia* (MTOP), available at http://aspirelr.link/acecqa-approved-elf
- National Quality Standard (NQS), available at http://aspirelr.link/acecqa-national-quality-standard
- the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at http://aspirelr.link/unicef-child-rights
- service standards, policies, procedures and philosophies.

Learning frameworks

Learning environments must demonstrate your pedagogy through the principles and practices of the EYLF and/or MTOP.

Framework principle	How this is demonstrated in the learning environment
Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	▶ Welcoming atmosphere ▶ Familiar educators and experiences ▶ No major changes in the environment without the children being prepared
Partnerships	▶ Families' input is valued and acted upon ▶ Results of parent–educator and child–educator partnerships are displayed

Framework principle	How this is demonstrated in the learning environment
High expectations and equity Respect for diversity	▶ Cultural and lifestyle diversity is evident ▶ Children work at different levels ▶ Developmental stages, strengths and interests are understood
Ongoing learning and reflective practice	▶ Environment evolving rather than suddenly changing ▶ Educators take a thoughtful approach

The practices of the frameworks also help to identify important features of the learning environment.

EYLF practice	MTOP practice	How this contributes to the learning environment
Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches	▶ Needs, strengths and interests catered for ▶ All facets of development and dispositions included
Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children	▶ Environment responds to the children's needs and directions
Learning through play	Learning through play	▶ Play as a priority for learning
Intentional teaching	Intentionality	▶ Spontaneous and planned teaching
Learning environments	Environments	▶ Spaces welcome and encourage learning
Cultural competence	Cultural competence	▶ Reflects diversity ▶ Supports individual identity
Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions	▶ Environment evolving rather than suddenly changing ▶ Familiar educators and experiences ▶ No major changes in the environment without the children being consulted or informed
Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning	▶ Constant observation and assessment by educators

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NQS

The National Quality Framework (NQF) includes the NQS, which provides a benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The NQS suggests that a learning environment should be:

- flexible and open-ended (Elements 1.2.2, 3.1.1, 3.2.1 and 3.2.2)
- appropriately challenging, so children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning (Elements 1.2.1, 1.3.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 5.2.1)
- a place to explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in challenging and safe ways (Elements 1.1.1, 3.2.2 and 5.2.1)
- warm, trusting and predictable (Element 5.1.1)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally binding instrument. As a signatory to the Convention, the Australian government has committed to protecting and ensuring the full range of human rights for children as set out in the Convention.

The Convention supports a learning environment through the following:

- A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life in conditions that promote dignity, independence and an active role in the community (Article 23).
- Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment (Article 29).
- Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live (Article 30).
- Every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural, recreational and artistic activities (Article 31).

Service standards, policies, procedures and philosophies

Your service will have developed policies and procedures that reflect what it identifies as important when creating learning environments. The EYLF/MTOP, NQS and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are used to inform the development of these policies and procedures. The organisation's standards will be based on the NQS.

Creating an environment for learning

A number of factors should be considered to facilitate an appropriate and inviting learning environment. These factors can also be used as a basis for evaluating the learning environment.

Time

When children are rushed through learning they miss opportunities to participate fully. This may cause frustration and lessen their learning potential. Learning should be unhurried and uninterrupted.

Children need time to:

- make choices and decisions
- become involved
- change direction
- become involved again
- practise and master skills
- form relationships
- express themselves.

When you allow children enough time for their learning, they will become involved and engaged, and will feel challenged and stimulated. Children may become frustrated or disruptive if they are not allowed to see their learning through to a logical conclusion, so, when possible, allow activities and games to be completed before changing activities.

If this isn't possible, explain the reason to the child and then organise a time when they can continue the learning. For example, 'Jackie, you've done such a good job building that tower, but it's lunchtime now. Please go and wash your hands for lunch, and I'll make sure your tower is safe so you can finish it after lunch.'

It can be difficult to judge how long children will continue with the same activity, as each experience will engage children in different ways and be interesting to different children. You should allow children's interest, rather than your planning cycle, to dictate how long an activity is enjoyed for.

Space, design and arrangement

You have limited control over the amount of space available for children's learning. Regulations set minimum standards regarding the amount of space that must be provided in a service. You may occupy a play space that is solely for your use, or share a space with other groups. In this case you will need to set up and pack up each day.

However, the arrangement of the space available is still within your control. Work with children to decide how the space should be used. The following table outlines some points to keep in mind.

Children need hands-on experiences	▶ Children need to explore, create, build and use their senses. ▶ Encourage children in these explorations by setting out their environment in an appropriate and interesting way.
Children need opportunities to be alone	▶ Children can become tired and overstimulated if they are in a group all day, every day. They need space where they can escape the hustle and bustle of the group. ▶ Children may have a desire to learn independently and may wish to do so uninterrupted or without other adults or children watching.

Children need choices	▶ The space should allow children to have a choice of two or three activities so they can learn about something that interests them. ▶ Indoor and outdoor choices should be offered if possible.
Children need challenges	▶ The space needs to offer a variety of possibilities, and should encourage children to think creatively, solve problems and make decisions. ▶ The space should be flexible to allow children to play in self-created learning or to mix two or more learning experiences.
Children need safety and security	▶ Children need to feel safe without feeling overprotected. ▶ Finding a balance between safety and healthy risk-taking is a challenging part of your job.

When you set up experiences for children, try to imagine how the child is going to see the experience, and identify what messages your set-up will send. Children learn through play, so many of your experiences will be focused on inviting children to play.

You also want to send a message to the children that:

- this space is cared for
- play and learning are valued and respected
- it is easy to play here
- you can change this space and play out your own ideas.

The physical environment sends messages, some of which are explained in the following table.

Message	Features
This is a good place to be.	▶ Children's senses are not bombarded by colours, noise or clutter. ▶ The environment is clean, bright and well prepared. ▶ All children and parents are made to feel welcome.
This place is safe and interesting.	▶ The environment has boundaries that are easy to understand. ▶ There are inviting and attractive displays and experiences. ▶ Materials are changed in line with children's interests. ▶ Safety is important but children are still able to develop competence. ▶ There are familiar staff.
I belong here.	▶ Each child has their own space for their belongings. ▶ There is child-appropriate furniture and children can access materials. ▶ Children's work is displayed. ▶ Children are encouraged to bring things into the environment.

Materials and equipment

When children are involving themselves in learning, they must have easy access to the materials, toys and equipment that facilitate their learning. These resources need to be regularly refreshed so that:

- they continue to address the children's needs
- children are stimulated in different ways
- a variety of activities is provided.

The resources that are made available to children have an important bearing on the quality and types of learning children can engage in.

It is important that materials and equipment:

- match individual children's interests, needs and abilities
- are safe, age-appropriate and in good working order
- are adequate in number to enable children to make choices
- are regularly rotated to ensure children are constantly provided with a variety of activities.

People

Staff–child ratios and the qualifications and experience of the educators working with children affect the learning experiences that can be presented to children. You must understand the importance of providing for and supporting children's play and learning. You need space and time to be able to interact with children, enhance social play, model appropriate behaviour and extend learning where possible.

The educators that comprise a team all contribute to the effectiveness of the learning environment. They influence:

- how the area is set up
- what resources and materials are used
- how safe and well supervised the areas are
- whether children are encouraged to take on challenges and use risk-taking skills
- the level of belonging the child feels
- how time and learning are prioritised
- how much time is spent indoors and outdoors.

Safety

When evaluating the safety of the learning environment, you need to consider the developmental abilities of the children, such as their level of:

- understanding of safety and danger
- spontaneous behaviour
- ability to follow limits and guidelines
- curiosity
- interest in adult-modelled behaviour
- independence
- understanding of consequences
- mobility and stability.

A safe environment is non-threatening, and should be a space where it is easy to share thoughts and ideas, ask questions and make mistakes as part of learning.

The older the children are, the more likely they will be able to manage equipment safely – particularly school-age children, who are interested in more complex, adult-type activities. All equipment should be in good working order and adequate supervision should be provided.

Indoor and outdoor environments

Indoor and outdoor learning spaces need to provide areas for all types of play: quiet, active, group and solitary play. Both areas should provide opportunities to practise fine and gross motor skills, as well as social skills.

Indoor areas

The following table outlines how children of various ages use indoor areas.

Age group	Use of indoor areas
Infants and toddlers	▶ Exploration and discovery ▶ Climbing ▶ Wheeled toys ▶ Mirrors ▶ Manipulative play ▶ Pretend play ▶ Block play ▶ Messy play ▶ Creative activities ▶ Quiet time
Preschoolers	▶ Dramatic play ▶ Block play ▶ Reading, language and listening centre ▶ Manipulative table or toy area for puzzles, threading and construction sets ▶ Maths area for sorting, classifying, matching and ordering games and activities ▶ Science and nature spaces ▶ Creative arts for clay, painting, drawing and collage ▶ Sand and water play ▶ Woodwork ▶ Cooking ▶ Quiet time
School-age children	▶ Creative activities – art, sewing, model building ▶ Construction – carpentry, destruction, block areas ▶ Pretend and performance play – doll, house, drama, music ▶ Relaxation – quiet or alone time, friendship ▶ Language – reading, writing ▶ Discovery – science, nature, maths

Outdoor areas

The outdoor space needs to be given the same level of consideration as indoors, and should also offer a mixture of active and restful experiences.

Outdoor play spaces need to be clearly defined so children can immediately see how the space can be used and can move easily between spaces without interfering with others at play. Natural features such as stepping stones can provide children with pathways and creative options for their physical play.

There should be a variety of interesting things to do – a quality outdoor environment offers each child a choice of four or five play activities.

Many services provide children with the opportunity to move indoors and outdoors as they please; this is called an indoor/outdoor program. Your staff ratios and service design will determine whether this is an option for you.

Almost all experiences planned for indoors can also be offered outdoors. However, outdoor areas offer the extra space needed for physically active play and gross motor activities. Children need opportunities to run, jump, dig, push, skip and climb.

The following table describes various outdoor areas and how they promote children's learning, experimentation and exploration.

Type of outdoor activity	Action	Learning concepts
Water play	▶ Manipulating water ▶ Pouring ▶ Tipping	▶ Capacity ▶ Volume ▶ Floating and sinking ▶ Wet and dry ▶ Force and pressure ▶ Evaporation and condensation
Sand and earth play	▶ Digging ▶ Pouring ▶ Moulding	▶ Wet and dry ▶ Weight ▶ Texture ▶ Volume
Blocks and woodwork play	▶ Hammering ▶ Sawing ▶ Stacking ▶ Balancing ▶ Fitting together	▶ Measurement ▶ Parts and whole ▶ Comparing

The outdoor environment is very important to many children. Respect for the land and caring for the environment are central to many cultures. Nurturing children's relationship to the land helps them learn about the environment and develop a strong sense of identity. It is helpful to acknowledge this by allowing children to:

- work and play outside as much as possible
- use the immediate environment as a source of learning
- play in family groupings.

Many children may also find relief in the outdoor environment if they are overwhelmed by larger groups of children, or the noise and sensory stimulation of the indoor environment.

Creating valuable learning opportunities

The resources and materials you provide as well as children's interests and abilities will affect how they interact with different areas in the learning environment.

When creating opportunities to learn, you need to consider the framework learning outcomes and the different aspects of a child's development. You also need to consider how you can provide opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning.

Your curriculum should be based around the EYLF and/or MTOP goals and outcomes. By including as many of these areas as possible, you will develop a fulfilling and balanced program of experiences.

As well as the EYLF/MTOP goals and outcomes, learning should be based on the following aspects of a child's development:

- physical development
- social, emotional and moral development
- intellectual development
- spiritual and creative development.

Watch this video about children's development.

EYLF/MTOP goals

The following outlines the goals of the EYLF/MTOP.

Belonging

Children knowing where and with whom they belong.

Being

Children living in the moment and being valued for what they are currently doing and learning.

Becoming

Children changing from who they are now to a new self that participates fully.

EYLF/MTOP outcomes

Each outcome of the EYLF/MTOP has associated sub-outcomes, as outlined in the following table.

Outcome	Sub-outcomes
Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity	▶ Children feel safe, secure and supported. ▶ Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency. ▶ Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities. ▶ Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.
Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world	▶ Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities, and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation. ▶ Children respond to diversity with respect. ▶ Children become aware of fairness. ▶ Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.
Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	▶ Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing. ▶ Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.
Outcome 4: 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. ▶ Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies, and natural and processed materials.
Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	▶ Children interact verbally and nonverbally with others for a range of purposes. ▶ Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts. ▶ Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media. ▶ Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work. ▶ Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

Physical development

During the first few years of life, children's fine and gross motor skills increase rapidly. At each stage of development, a child first masters a movement, then elaborates on it and practises until satisfied, before moving on to learn something new.

Play allows children to consolidate skills they have already mastered, as well as enabling them to use their bodies in many new and challenging ways, such as climbing, standing, stretching, grasping and hopping.

Physical activities help children to:

- develop strength and stamina
- release excess energy
- learn hand–eye coordination
- develop balance.

Social, emotional and moral development

Children learn many social skills through play. They encounter situations where they learn to collaborate with others, make choices and decisions, and experience failure and success.

Pretend play assists children to explore the world of feelings and relationships. By playing out situations collaboratively with others, children can come to terms with their world.

Emotionally, children's growth is also fostered through play as they learn to manage a variety of feelings.

Morally, children learn through play about right and wrong – how to treat others fairly and what it feels like to be treated unfairly. They also learn about their community, conservation and the environment as they share stories with others.

Some social skills you may see children practising during play include:

- taking turns
- sharing
- negotiating
- cooperating and collaborating
- thinking
- setting rules and guidelines.

From as early as two years of age, children begin to notice physical differences in people, particularly differences relating to gender, skin colour and physical disabilities. This is part of children's discovery of themselves. Children work out who they are from their experiences with others.

When children start forming relationships with others, they develop attitudes about differences. Play can help children to learn to accept and value all people, particularly those who may appear different from themselves.

You can support this learning by:

- creating a play environment that reflects many kinds of people and many ways of living
- arranging a play setting that promotes participation of boys and girls, children with or without disabilities, and children of various cultural backgrounds
- challenging any behaviour that alerts you to negative attitudes that may be developing; for example, if a child refuses to include another child in play because of their appearance or physical ability, you should intervene and provide support for both children
- involving parents in any issues that centre on children's play.

Watch this video about children's emotional development.

Intellectual development

Communication begins at birth. Infants cry to express their needs and coo when they hear human voices to encourage engagement. Through their play and interactions with others, children begin to learn the essence of communication. The development of communication is an integral aspect of intellectual development.

Children learn to grasp ideas or concepts such as:

- same and different
- sorting and classifying
- ordering or sequencing
- cause and effect
- problem-solving and decision-making
- negotiating
- controlling their environment.

School-age children develop their cognitive and language skills in areas such as reading, writing, self-expression and understanding of others (theory of mind).

Spiritual and creative development

One aspect of spiritual development is religion. Unless your service is affiliated with a religious body, religion is left for parents to manage.

More broadly, however, spiritual development refers to the consideration of things greater than yourself. When you have a sense of awe or wonder, think about your purpose in the world, see all humans as having common needs or reflect on the meaning of life, you are expanding your spiritual development.

The spiritual learning of children can be supported by:

- encouraging children to think about and listen to the world around them
- exploring and discussing nature
- caring for the environment and other people
- participating in celebrations and events
- helping others to feel secure and loved
- experiencing enjoyment with others.

Part of this process is the child learning to express themselves. Children will learn through play by using a variety of creative materials and experiences, such as:

- drawing
- painting
- play dough
- using clay
- finger painting
- collage
- block play
- woodwork.

Watch this video about supporting children's creativity and problem-solving skills.

Example

Activities that help children develop

Lucinda, an educator, has set up a play dough activity. On the table she has provided:

- play dough
- a rolling pin
- biscuit cutters
- scissors
- pebbles and feathers.

The children working with the play dough each use different abilities and have the chance to develop in different areas.

Development area	Skills practised
Physical	▶ Rolling, pounding, cutting and moulding
Social, emotional and moral	▶ Talking about their work ▶ Sharing play dough and materials ▶ Creating pretend play scenarios ▶ Manipulating the play dough to express emotions
Cognitive	▶ Planning what to create ▶ Working out how to represent ideas
Communication	▶ Telling others about their creations ▶ Chatting while working
Spiritual	▶ Connecting with the physical activity ▶ Thinking about what it's like to work with other people
Creative	▶ Imagining how to use the materials ▶ Creating an idea ▶ Manipulating the dough to the shapes desired

Opportunities for collaborative learning

Collaborative learning and sustained shared thinking are two strategies for supporting children to work with you and other children to solve problems, clarify concepts and evaluate what is happening. Put simply, it is when children and educators work together and have conversations to solve problems. These two strategies allow you to support children to work with others to achieve goals. Methods for facilitating collaborative learning and sustained shared thinking include:

- providing time for deep involvement in activities
- encouraging the extension of learning through conversation and exploration
- engaging children in what they are doing, whether as part of routine activities or learning experiences
- planning the day so that educators are available to interact with and support children fully
- using open-ended questions
- providing rich, responsive environments that engage children's curiosity.

Meaningful conversations and in-depth investigation that is verbalised and extended will lead to collaborative learning.

Creating inclusive environments

An inclusive environment is one in which families and the community are respected. Each child brings a unique set of beliefs and values to your service. These are worked through as they play with their peers and experience the differences and similarities between themselves and others.

When you provide for the child's needs and help them to understand their similarities and differences, you are helping them to feel a sense of belonging. You are also demonstrating respect for the child and their family. You should encourage children to learn about people's similarities and differences.

Reflecting diversity

Because play has such a large social value, the play environment must reflect the many different lifestyles and people who make up society. Consider each child's needs in relation to:

- race and culture
- gender
- age
- interests and preferences
- social context and lifestyle
- communication style
- personality
- length of time attending the service
- abilities.

If play activities are to reflect the diversity of the children and their community, you should ensure that:

- you model inclusive and accepting behaviour
- something about or from each child is reflected or displayed in the environment
- materials do not project limited ideas of gender roles
- resources and content reflect everyday differences and similarities between people in Australia and around the world.

You may like to include:

- physically correct dolls that reflect different races, abilities, occupations and types of dress
- celebrations from a variety of cultures
- books, photos and videos that show a broad range of people and lifestyles
- resources that show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in traditional and modern settings.

Watch this video about talking to families to understand children's individual needs.

Cultural and racial backgrounds

You can encourage children to learn about the cultural and racial backgrounds of others by:

- allowing children to use play that depicts their culture or uses their first language
- being aware of children's racial backgrounds and, if possible, incorporating resources that are relevant to the curriculum; for example, Chinese cookware for the home corner, cultural dress for dress-ups, dolls with a variety of skin colours, or Aboriginal musical instruments for music time
- including culturally diverse resources as part of the day-to-day environment rather than just bringing them out on special days or occasions
- respecting all the cultures that you are exposed to every day
- continually educating yourself about aspects of the children's lives outside the service
- not stereotyping any child or family
- including special occasions that children in your service participate in.

Gender

To encourage children to have open-minded ideas about gender you should present all activities equally to boys and girls. For example, you should encourage boys to dress up and girls to engage in messy play, and initiate spontaneous interactions with all children in the group.

At the same time, you need to be aware that boys and girls play differently from each other. You can't force boys to play with dolls or girls to play with cars if they aren't interested, but you can show them that their options are always open.

Finally, you will need to be respectful of the attitudes of individual families. A family might have rigid ideas of gender roles; you cannot force them to change their mind, but as you get to know them and build a good relationship, they may come to see that broadening their child's options is a good thing.

Children needing additional support

To encourage learning about and acceptance of children who need additional support, you should:

- include them in all types of play for all aspects of development
- participate in the play to show the other children ways to include everyone and to encourage interactions
- provide specific equipment or set-up to ensure success
- follow any individual programs children have had developed by a specialist service
- ensure that the children's individual programs are incorporated into the overall play setting to provide an inclusive experience
- encourage a range of children to participate in activities specified by specialist services, not just the child who needs the additional support.

Promoting an appreciation of the natural environment

Most children have a fascination with the environment and the things they find living in it. If they interact with nature and natural materials they can be encouraged to appreciate the value and beauty of the environment.

However, caring for and appreciating the natural environment is far more important to children than how it looks and what treasures it can hold. The future of our ecosystem resides in the knowledge children hold and the actions they take to care for the environment, and the plants and animals in it.

The best way to promote an appreciation for the environment is to encourage children to interact with nature. The best learning will occur when you discuss the environment while children are interacting with nature.

There are many ways to encourage children to enjoy and learn about the environment:

- Use the outdoor space often.
- Include as many natural elements as possible in the environment.
- Encourage children to touch, listen, look and smell.
- Have picnics.
- Grow plants together.
- Visit the zoo, museum and aquarium.
- Arrange visits from mobile farms, animal experts and science educators.
- Use reference books, online searches, pictures and posters, and the knowledge of parents, educators and others in the community (such as park rangers, gardeners and Aboriginal elders).
- Use stories, songs, movement and poetry.
- Introduce curriculum themes on animals and plants.

Suitable topics and projects

Suitable topics about the environment you can discuss with children include simple conversations such as:

- how we feel, smell, taste, see and hear
- how we breathe air
- how and why we drink water
- how the sun keeps us warm.

As children's ability to understand the world expands, so will their questions about the environment. These discussions are usually more complex, and may extend into larger projects that span hours, days or weeks.

The following table provides some examples of activities to introduce.

Activity	Discussion ideas	Project ideas
Extend on day-to-day routines and interactions	▶ Where foods come from ▶ What happens when you flush the toilet ▶ How you get water from a tap ▶ What it's like where you live ▶ What pets need ▶ Why people are all different	▶ Go on an excursion to a farm. ▶ Learn about food chains. ▶ Find out about different climates around the world. ▶ Adopt a pet and care for it. ▶ Explore the life cycle of a butterfly. ▶ Create family trees.
Explore the surrounding natural environment	▶ Shape, colour and texture of the materials ▶ Where the materials come from ▶ What they are used for in nature ▶ What they can be used for now ▶ Why to leave natural materials in the environment ▶ How different parts of the ecosystem rely on one another	▶ Keep a log of the things you find, including names and drawings or photos. ▶ Encourage children to explore the environment using a magnifying glass. ▶ Establish an ant farm.
Take care of plants	▶ What they need to grow ▶ How they provide oxygen ▶ Which plants are native to the area and which plants are introduced	▶ Grow a garden, including vegetables and herbs. ▶ Create a life cycle of plants in your garden. ▶ Develop an album of plants, including photos and scientific names.

Activity	Discussion ideas	Project ideas
Find out about sustainability topics	▶ Recycling ▶ Reusing ▶ Reducing water and electricity use ▶ Reducing waste	▶ Develop a recycling system, worm farm or compost heap. ▶ Find ways to reuse items in the service creatively. ▶ Implement reduction plans. ▶ Have a rainwater tank installed and monitor rainfall and water level.

Encouraging creative play and learning through nature

The diversity you find in nature provides children with many experiences of colour, texture, size and shape. Children of all ages can benefit from the use of natural materials in play. These materials enable children to begin to understand and appreciate the world of living things.

You can develop a collection of natural materials that children can use by sourcing them from second-hand shops or asking families to donate them.

Practice task 1

1. List **three** ideas to include the natural environment in your learning environment that you could implement immediately.

2. Ask another educator for an idea they have for including the natural environment in the learning environment and record it here.

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3. Explain how each of these ideas promotes children's appreciation of the natural environment.

1B Evaluating and modifying the learning environment

A responsive program is one that is constantly evolving. In order to identify how effective your environment is, you must assess and evaluate it continually.

A responsive program evolves constantly due to the planned and unplanned events that occur daily. When changes take place to extend, improve and tailor the program, it is usually a sign that your curriculum is responsive to children, as highlighted in the learning frameworks.

Documentation and planning are an important part of working with young children. In order to effectively meet their needs, educators need to consider practical and meaningful ways to document what they notice and think about how they can share this information with children and families.

To evaluate the learning environment, it is helpful to consider all the factors that make a positive learning environment and think about whether they are currently being implemented.

Purpose of evaluation

Assessment and evaluation provide educators with the opportunity to reflect on their pedagogy, their teaching strategies and the learning environment.

Assessment and evaluation can occur in various ways and at various times in a curriculum planning process.

Programs should be constantly evaluated to identify problems, develop interventions, identify opportunities and improvements, and design strategies for implementing new and innovative ideas. This is called continuous improvement.

Once teaching has occurred, evidence should be gathered to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and to identify the learning that has taken place. Information on how the experience went, and your overall evaluation of the experience, setting and environment can be recorded.

You will use evaluation for the reasons outlined in the following table.

Purpose of evaluation	Benefits
To identify spontaneous interests catered for through unplanned teaching and learning	This provides further assessment records and information that may be used to extend teaching and learning in other areas.
To identify extensions and changes	This enables you to clarify needs and identify the ways children prefer teaching and learning to occur.

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Purpose of evaluation	Benefits
To identify what worked and what didn't work	This enables you to determine whether the teaching and learning met the objectives, whether the teaching was age-appropriate, whether you provided enough props and equipment, and what you can do to extend on this teaching.
To obtain input from another person	This gives you another perspective on the value of the teaching and learning and how you provided it. You can gain feedback on whether the teaching was suitable and how you can improve it.

Evaluation questions

Consider the following evaluation questions when assessing the learning environment.

Evaluation question	What you may find out
What did or did not work?	By evaluating the learning that occurred through your teaching, you are developing knowledge of which experiences were successful with different children and groups. Note if there are any factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the experience. These influences may involve: ▶ children's needs ▶ the sequence of activities ▶ the resources or materials (including staff) ▶ the time allowed ▶ available space (too much or too little) ▶ aesthetics (presentation of the materials, space, experience as a whole)
Who did and did not participate?	By noting who did and didn't participate in learning experiences, you gain important information about the interests, strengths and needs of children. You can monitor each child or group's level of interest. Ensure that the children you have planned learning experiences for are actually participating in them and are meeting any objectives.

Evaluation question	What you may find out
Was the learning experience age-appropriate? What can you extend on?	Learning experiences may not work because they are too long or too short; the children may not be interested in the activity; or the activity may be too advanced for their developmental stage. When evaluating the appropriateness of the teaching, look at how the children could be extended beyond the experience. Never wait for the children to be bored before increasing the challenge. Any ideas you have for modification, including suggestions from the children, should be noted as they will yield ways to extend the children's development and further enrich the learning to increase the interest levels of the children.
Was the learning experience effective and enjoyable for the children?	When evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching, look at whether the learning you planned for was achieved, whether the children enjoyed the learning and whether the level of participation was as you predicted.
What feedback have I received?	Consultation with parents and children is an essential part of evaluation. This may occur as part of daily discussion, through meetings or as part of in-depth discussions. People such as other educators, others caring for the child and resource and referral bodies should also be consulted. All educators working with the learning plan need to be consulted in order for them to give you feedback on their perspectives on implementation and future success.
How does this affect my teaching plans?	A teaching and learning experience does not stop at evaluation. Evaluation allows you to take further assessment records and to make future plans. Using the information from your evaluations, you will be able to gather ideas from the teaching and learning that you can use to meet a new set of objectives and to identify what is appropriate or inappropriate for the group or individuals.

Ensuring an effective curriculum

Answering 'yes' to the following questions indicates an effective curriculum, plans and experiences:

- Are children engaged and active?
- Are there clear goals that everyone is working toward?
- Are there learning and development priorities?
- Are children's ages, stages of development, abilities, language and culture all catered for?
- Is there a holistic approach?
- Are families and the community respected?
- Are prior learning experiences being built on?
- Are the EYLF/MTOP outcomes being represented?

Planned teaching and learning

Planned teaching occurs when you prepare an activity or experience beforehand. Planned learning is the outcome of this planned teaching.

Planned teaching and learning may be based on observation records that you collect and analyse, or it may build on an interest you notice and take time to prepare before offering it to the children. It may include any intentional teaching you provide, the group experiences you develop and the way you deliberately set up the environment, interact or demonstrate.

Unplanned teaching and learning

Unplanned teaching and learning is the result of spontaneous activity. It stems from an unexpected event that you choose to develop into greater value.

To make the most of spontaneous learning, you should be continually evaluating what is happening and making decisions about whether the children are engaged in experiences and are learning through their own actions, or whether they are at a point where your involvement would be supportive.

Reasons for modification

The NQS reminds you that you need to be constantly responsive to the environment and be prepared to modify it. The following guidance from the NQS provides reasons why you may need to modify the learning environment.

Part of NQS	Guidance
Element 1.1.2	▶ Demonstrating flexibility in program delivery to incorporate children's ideas, cultures and interests to ensure that experiences are relevant and engaging ▶ Allowing children to initiate and contribute to play experiences that emerge from their own ideas and interests to their satisfaction ▶ Encouraging children to repeat, revisit and add to projects or experiences that they have initiated
Element 1.1.3	▶ Seeking opportunities in routines for spontaneous learning ▶ Minimising the times during which children are expected to do the same thing at the same time ▶ Employing strategies to involve children in designing the program and organising the routines
Element 1.2.2	▶ Making use of spontaneous 'teachable moments' to extend children's learning
Element 1.2.3	▶ Supporting play experiences initiated by children ▶ Allowing children to direct their own play and leisure experiences with their peers

Effective evaluation can identify a need for modification. Try evaluating the learning environment and the experiences children are involved in by looking at why modification may be required.

Reason for modification	Examples
To support all aspects of children's learning	▶ New ideas emerge ▶ The learning experience is too challenging ▶ The learning experience is not challenging enough ▶ The children have explored this concept and are ready to learn something new ▶ More natural or open-ended resources are required
To promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning	▶ More or less children want to be involved ▶ More or less space is required ▶ There are distractions, so you need to move to another area ▶ The discussion evolves into a larger learning concept ▶ You need to use more open questions
To ensure that families and the community are respected	▶ Involvement is not suitable at present ▶ Families express a certain wish about the service ▶ Changes in the family influence the plans ▶ You learn something new about a family
To enhance opportunities for children's learning from other educators, children and their families	▶ Timetables need to be more flexible ▶ Inadequate communication or involvement is noted
To foster children's development	▶ Monitoring is not provided ▶ Monitoring takes too wide a focus ▶ The EYLF/MTOP is not properly represented

Initiating modification

Children can initiate modifications to the play environment by:

- being allowed to direct their own play and leisure experiences with peers
- initiating experiences
- sharing observations and ideas with you.

You should respond to observations you make and adjust the environment accordingly. This includes providing for individual children's interests and responding to the group's actions in the environment. You should also provide planned and unplanned teaching throughout the day.

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You can also make modifications to the environment based on consultation with others. This includes asking children about experiences they have participated in, and consulting with families. You should also seek feedback from other educators, particularly your supervisor or educational leader.

Implementing modifications

Modifications that you apply to the learning environment can occur through a planning process or through immediate action.

As you watch children play and listen to their ideas you may find that opportunities arise for you to provide support and extension to their play and learning. When you provide extensions to play you are usually modifying the learning environment in some way. You will do this so that children remain engaged for longer periods and can find a broader range of options for their play. These modifications may be as simple as adding some new props, suggesting a larger or smaller place or introducing a new idea about their topic of learning.

Example

Different ways of extending play

Example 1

A group of four-year-olds are playing shop in the home corner. Maria, an educator, notices there aren't many props available for this play, so she suggests to the children that they come to the factory (the storeroom) to see if they can gather some more supplies to fit out their shop. The children are pleased with the idea and find some interesting stock for their shop. The other children in the room enjoy dropping in to the expanded shop at various times for the rest of the day.

Example 2

Jane (an educator) observes William (four years) 'shearing' teddy bears and plush toys in the kindergarten room. William recently watched sheep being shorn on his family farm and it has obviously captured his interest.

Jane helps the children set up a shearing shed in the block corner using A-frames and cushions. William's dad brings in some fleece and an old pair of shears with blunt blades. One of the other parents brings in some toy sheep.

Jane teaches the children songs about shearing and finds posters and books about shearing time to display and read.

Practice task 2

1. Choose a learning experience currently being used by children.
   a. Describe the experience, including how old the children are, what materials are being used and how the experience is set up.

b. Evaluate the experience using the following questions, and explain your answers:

- Are children engaged and active?
- Are there clear goals that everyone is working toward?
- Are children's ages, stages of development, abilities, language and culture all catered for?
- Are prior learning experiences being built on?
- Are families and the community respected?
- Are the EYLF/MTOP outcomes being represented?
- Are organisational standards, policies and procedures being followed?

c. Using your evaluation, identify whether you would modify the experience. Explain why or why not.

2. A group of children are playing outdoors when they find a flat soccer ball. They try to play with it, but it is too difficult to kick.
   a. What modification could you make to the environment?

   b. Which element of the NQS supports your modification?

3. You have set up a science table with a magnifying glass and slides. You have tried to show the children how they can use the magnifying glass to see the slides close up, but they are not able to understand the concept of size in relation to the slides, or identify the parts that are on the slides.
   a. What modification could you make to the environment?

   b. Which element of the NQS supports your modification?

Summary

- The resources and materials you provide for different types of learning will affect how the child interacts with a learning area. The way they interact is also determined by their interests and abilities.
- Most children have a fascination with the natural environment; interacting with natural materials will help them develop an appreciation for the value and beauty of nature.
- Evaluation and modification of learning environments is about identifying how to increase the learning capacity of the environment.
- A responsive program is one that is constantly evolving. In order to identify how effective the curriculum is, you must assess and evaluate it continually.
- The modifications that you apply to the learning environment will occur as a result of the planning process or through immediate action.
- By including children in planning activities and experiences, you provide opportunities for discussion and can observe their interactions.

Learning checkpoint 1
Developing appropriate settings and environments

Part A

Document the results of a spontaneous modification you made to the learning environment.

1. Describe the initial environment, including:
   - the set-up
   - the age of the children it was prepared for.

2. Describe what you modified and why. Include:
   - an explanation of the aspects of the children's learning that the modification was designed to support
   - how the children were involved in the modification through consultation
   - the EYLF/MTOP outcome the modified environment links to.

3. Provide a short summary of how the children interacted with the new environment.

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Part B

1. Prepare a collaborative learning experience for a small group of children based on a topic that relates to respecting families and/or the community.

   Document:

   - how you will prepare the environment
   - how you will engage the children
   - what you will talk about and the questions you will ask the children
   - the props, materials and equipment you will use.

2. Implement the discussion. Evaluate the discussion by answering the following questions.

   a. Were your preparations adequate? Explain.

   b. What EYLF/MTOP outcome did the resulting environment link to?

Part C

Review your service's learning environment. Identify one play space that you could modify to enable the children to gain a greater appreciation of the natural environment.

1. Describe the initial environment, including:
   - the set-up
   - the available materials and resources
   - the age of the children it was prepared for.

2. Modify the environment and answer the following questions.
   a. What did you modify? Why?

   b. How were the children involved in the modification?

   c. What was the outcome of your modification?

d. How does the new environment promote a greater appreciation of the natural environment?

e. How did the children interact with the new environment?

f. Which EYLF/MTOP outcome does the resulting environment link to?

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A **Consulting with others about curriculum and learning environments**

2B **Creating curriculum that reflects the service philosophy**

Designing and implementing curriculum in consultation with others

Your curriculum and the learning environment should be responsive to children and families, while upholding your service philosophy. When designing and implementing the curriculum you need to ensure it offers opportunities for children and families to contribute their ideas, thoughts and extensions for play. You should also integrate a variety of age- and stage-appropriate opportunities for play and learning.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
✓	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
✓	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

2A Consulting with others about curriculum and learning environments

As an educator, you will design and implement curriculum in consultation with others. Consultation with children and families can be used to reflect on the current curriculum and learning environments, to identify current strengths and to review goals.

Through this process of reflection, more options for activities and experiences will emerge. As a result the learning environment will be extended and the confidence of others will build as they introduce new ideas and help modify and develop the curriculum.

Benefits of consulting with others

Consultation is a process of information exchange. As an educator you need to consult with children and families to reflect on and evaluate the curriculum.

Consulting with families and children will ensure that:

- you gather information from a range of people, each with their own perspectives and experiences
- children's home life is acknowledged
- full participation is encouraged
- there is greater interest in the learning environment
- parents feel more comfortable about offering materials or resources to help implement an activity of their choice
- you will be stimulated to explore new ideas and develop closer relationships
- routines are more likely to meet children's needs.

Consulting with children

If you communicate with children frequently in meaningful and authentic discussions, you should gain a genuine understanding of each child. Children will feel that their contributions, ideas and interests are valued and appreciated when you talk to them and act on their suggestions. When you take the time to get to know each child and provide a program that genuinely reflects their needs, they will feel 'belonging', enjoy 'being' and extend themselves into 'becoming'.

This process shows that you value the learning framework principle of having high expectations of children and the learning framework practice of being responsive to children.

Consultation with children allows you to find out how they view the curriculum and learning environment. It helps you to understand the reasons why they like doing some activities and not others.

There are many ways to consult with children and gather responses. You might use:

- group or individual discussion and questioning
- spontaneous discussion or suggestions
- anecdotal discussion (sharing stories and experiences).

One-on-one interactions with children offer the opportunity to consult with them on a diverse range of topics. It is an opportunity to learn about and connect with the child as they may disclose more in these interactions than in the larger group setting. It gives the child a chance to identify and communicate their own needs, strengths and goals.

Example

Consulting with a child about the environment

Shaheen, an educator, notices that Nyla sits down at the collage table with two other children but leaves again almost immediately. Shaheen asks, 'Nyla, wouldn't you like to make a collage today?' Nyla says that there is no spare paper to paste onto, the glue brush is sticky on the handle and she can't use the sparkles because the other children have moved all the glitter to their side of the table. Shaheen adjusts the experience and materials, and Nyla returns to the activity.

Consultation topics

To gain information that can be used to reflect on the current program, consult the children about the following factors.

Play preferences	▶ Where the child prefers to play ▶ What play the child is involved in ▶ Who the child plays with
Social interactions	▶ The child's peer and adult interactions, including the purpose of their interactions
Communication	▶ Verbal and nonverbal communication skills and abilities, including who the child communicates with and how effectively they communicate
Language	▶ How language is used ▶ What level the child's receptive and productive language abilities have reached
Participation preferences	▶ How the child prefers to approach activities – by watching, copying, being shown by an educator or doing immediately
Physical abilities	▶ The child's fine motor skills ▶ The child's gross motor skills ▶ Their fundamental skills
Emotional status	▶ The child's temperament and personality ▶ How the child copes with fear, enjoyment, excitement and change
Out-of-character behaviour or events	▶ How the child is reacting to or coping in the environment

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Consulting with families

Parents and other family members will have a sound knowledge of their child's temperament, interests, skills and developmental needs. Asking them to share this knowledge will help you to understand the child better.

Ongoing sharing of information between the service and parents contributes to strong, respectful relationships, as well as shared responsibility for monitoring the strengths and needs of the child. NQS Element 6.1.1 requires that: 'Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions'.

The EYLF/MTOP Principle: Partnerships is also vital. By consulting families and taking suggestions on board, you are responding to parents and working with them to create more suitable learning environments. By developing open lines of communication from the beginning of your relationship with each family, you can work together in the best interests of the child.

To consult with families about their child, you may:

- ask parents and family members to fill in forms, such as enrolment forms or routine forms that provide key information
- provide opportunities for parents and family members to participate in feedback methods, such as suggestion boxes or surveys
- engage parents and family members in discussions at drop-off and pick-up times
- develop methods so that parents and family members can write or record information, when necessary
- ask specific questions about their child
- share the information you have gathered about the child and ask them to add details and clarify information.

When families provide information, show your interest and encourage them to continue sharing information. To facilitate effective information exchange with parents you must make yourself available to speak with them at appropriate times. This availability may vary according to the structure of your service and your role and responsibilities.

Times when you can make yourself available to consult with parents and family members include:

- when welcoming children and their parents to the service
- during face-to-face conversations when the parents arrive to collect the child
- during telephone conversations
- during organised review meetings or conversations
- while the parent participates in an activity
- when chatting informally in a tea and coffee area
- when parents and family members call in during the day.

By planning to consult at these times you highlight the importance that your service places on communication. Parents appreciate this knowledge transfer as it is vital in meeting the needs of their child.

The frequency and level of communication you have with parents or family members may vary, depending on factors such as:

- how often the child attends the service
- the child's developmental milestones
- how long the family has been using the service
- the family's expectations of the service.

Consulting with families about the curriculum

Ongoing consultation with parents and family members keeps you up to date with their needs for their child; it also enables them to share the significant events that occur. Life events such as divorce, celebrations, the death of a pet or a family member moving overseas will all affect the child's abilities, behaviour and needs. These events affect different children in different ways, so consult to find out what is happening at home so you know how the child is responding to the event.

It may seem that consultation about these events takes the focus off the curriculum. However, families are measuring the success of the curriculum by how well it meets their needs, how successfully it caters for their child, and how well it provides for learning and development.

Parents should have access to their child's records and should be encouraged to view them. Encourage them to become interested and aware of the development, interests and strengths you have identified in their child. You will need to make time for this in your day or develop a system for parents to do this independently. By sharing records with parents, you are including them in your curriculum and demonstrating your interest in their child. After viewing records, parents may identify areas you don't yet know about the child, such as a cultural factor or a skill the child has developed at home.

Parents may share concerns with you or describe how they have dealt with child-rearing issues. This will help you to develop a relationship with the parent and may open a discussion of shared strategies. Taking a collaborative approach demonstrates respect for the family.

Practice task 3

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Nina, an educator, makes time with Despina's mother, Angela, to look at the records Nina has been keeping of Despina's interests and skills.

When Angela looks through the portfolio assessment, she is pleased to see Despina's work and learning stories. She tells Nina she will make time to look at the portfolio every week now.

Angela identifies three skills that Despina is able to achieve competently at home that are not yet marked on the milestone checklist. Angela asks if she can add other milestones as they occur. Nina says that she would welcome that and would encourage all parents to do so.

Angela tells Nina that previously she thought that the records belonged to the service, and didn't realise that she could contribute in this way. Nina explains that parent contribution is welcome at all times.

Angela then says that she would like to know about toilet learning strategies at the service as she has seen signs at home that Despina is ready. Nina explains the strategies, including a 'toilet communication book' that can go back and forward between the home and the service with the child each day.

Angela suggests that parents be made aware of the toilet learning strategies through a poster or newsletter article in case they forget to ask or feel hesitant.

Nina updates Despina's records to note that she is ready to try toilet learning next week. Nina and Angela organise a time to catch up again before it starts.

1. Name one of Despina's strengths and two goals that were identified for her.

2. List **two** open questions you could ask a child to consult them about the current learning environment.

2B Creating curriculum that reflects the service philosophy

As described in the EYLF/MTOP, a curriculum is all interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events that occur in the learning environment. It includes all the planned activities that are set out for children to participate in, as well as the unplanned or spontaneous experiences. Your curriculum is based on your preparation, resources, modifications and reflections.

Curriculum is built on observations you collect about children's progress towards the outcomes of the learning frameworks.

Planning

Planning helps you to determine best possible practice. It allows you to prepare and provide a curriculum that is responsive to the children you work with. It also allows appropriate measures to be taken to achieve goals and develop specific skills.

Planning includes spontaneous moments, such as evaluating and modifying an experience during the day or identifying a teachable moment to introduce new ideas, materials or discussions. Sometimes you may plan for immediate action, and other times you may plan for a day or week ahead, depending on the depth and complexity of the topic.

Regardless of the planning methodologies you or your service may use, the reasons for planning remain the same. You are responding to emerging skills, focusing on learning that could occur, and making it possible.

Planning formats

You can show others how you provide for children's learning and play by developing methods for visually displaying links to outcomes. Regulation 75 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations states that all registered services must display this information about the educational program. Whether you display these as individual documents that are accessible to all stakeholders or as a wall display, you are providing the how, what and why of your curriculum and learning environment.

There are many ways to record your plans. The following pictures show a couple of different ways you could do it.

In some services a specific format is required or a template is provided. Whichever format you use, the plan should:

- communicate the experiences and activities you are implementing
- reflect the views your service has about approaches to early childhood learning
- reflect the EYLF/MTOP outcomes by linking them with your chosen experiences and activities
- reflect the philosophy of the service
- be a living document that you can add to as the children spontaneously interact with the environment and learn through unplanned experiences
- be understood by families and educators
- use inclusive language.

The resources in the following table provide a range of options for formatting your program plans. Remember that these types of documents need to be updated regularly. You will also need to follow your organisation's standards, policies and procedures for completing program plans.

Source	Link
Early Childhood Resource Hub	http://aspirelr.link/ecrh
Educators' guide to the early years learning framework for Australia	http://aspirelr.link/educators-guide-eylf
Educators' guide to the framework for school age care in Australia	http://aspirelr.link/mtop-educator-guide-pdf
Pinterest – Collections of online framework programming tools, templates and ideas put together by other educators	http://aspirelr.link/eylf-pinterest http://aspirelr.link/eylf-theories-and-programming-info
Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority	http://aspirelr.link/qcaa-samples-and-templates

Example

Different planning methods

Educator 1

Kelly, an educator, collects observation records throughout the week. At the start of each week, when she is provided with time for planning, she sets out a schedule for change she wants to introduce throughout the week. It includes plans for:

- experience changes that will occur immediately to meet children's needs
- extension modifications that will occur over the next week
- new experiences that will be implemented when the experiences already on offer require change.

Kelly also refreshes her planning documentation so that it is easy to see all these elements.

Educator 2

Gerda, an educator, likes an emerging response to planning. She usually responds immediately to opportunities in the play environment for extension, and she involves the children in the change. At times she needs to delay these changes until the next day, as she needs to organise new materials. Gerda includes the children in this planning as it heightens their involvement – sometimes they bring in additional and complementary resources. Because Gerda plans with the children, this frees up her dedicated planning time for other aspects of preparation.

Philosophy of the service

The philosophy of your service is pivotal in designing and implementing a curriculum. The way you put the philosophy into practice is called pedagogy.

The NQF can be used to inform the philosophy of your service and provides the best-practice goals your service should work toward. The components that influence your curriculum are mandated through the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations. These components include the NQS, and the EYLF/MTOP.

The NQS states that a service philosophy should embrace the following principles:

- The rights of the child are paramount.
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners.
- Equity, inclusion and diversity are upheld.
- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.
- The role of parents and families is respected and supported.
- There are high expectations for children, educators and service providers.

A philosophy is a statement that reflects a belief system. If you have viewed the philosophies of other services, you will know that they are all different, yet share common components. Some of the differences in philosophy will emerge through:

- culturally specific service beliefs
- values and beliefs about children, and their development and learning
- values and beliefs about society and communities.

The goals of a service will also influence its philosophy, as services adjust their programs to embody their priorities. These may include:

- creativity
- recreation
- holistic care and development
- personal attention and flexibility
- learning and education
- social interaction and development
- language development
- psychomotor development
- cultural identity and knowledge
- environmental understanding
- confidence with technology
- multicultural understanding
- emotional wellbeing
- spiritual and moral development.

Example

Program planning philosophy

Philosophy

At One World for Children's Centre the program planning philosophy is designed to reflect the needs of the children in accordance with the EYLF and MTOP. Programming covers all learning outcomes: identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication.

The EYLF and MTOP describe childhood as a time of belonging, being and becoming. We incorporate these three elements into our planning:

- Belonging is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong because of the relationships they have with their family, community, culture and place.
- Being is about living here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be'—time to play, try new things and have fun.

Element 7.1.1: A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.

Element 1.1.1: Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.

- Becoming is about the learning and development that young children experience. Children start to form their sense of identity from an early age, which shapes the type of adult they will become.

Play is the learning process that enables children to learn through hands-on experiences, such as doing, experimenting, predicting, trial and error, and achieving. As the children play to learn, they bring their unique talents to the education process. An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.

All children have the right to participate in the program by ensuring children of differing genders, abilities and cultures have equal access to experiences and equipment provided within the program.

A variety of multicultural, non-gender-biased, additional needs and environmentally sensitive equipment is used within the centre. Books, music and posters allow the children to see a well-balanced perspective of the world that subtly sends out messages of sustainability, peace and respect.

The programs incorporate ideas and principles of Steiner, Montessori and Reggio Emilia, ensuring that our programs are of best practice.

Parent participation and involvement is an important aspect of the overall program planning process. It is essential to maintain continuity between the home, the community and the centre, giving children a sense of belonging. We also endeavour to involve parents to ensure a collaborative approach to the overall development of each child's experience within the program.

Children's health needs are supported and all transition times, including meal times, sleep times, toileting and nappy-changing times are used as learning experiences as well as relaxed social times for both the staff and children.

Element 1.1.1: Concept relates to using the approved learning framework.

Standard 3.2: The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

Element 4.2.2: Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

Element 5.1.2: The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.

Element 1.1.3: All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

Element 6.1.2: The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

Standard 2.1: Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.

Philosophy development

Most philosophies are developed by combining the ideas of all the stakeholders who contribute to them. Many aspects of the philosophy can be identified by asking these stakeholders what they would like the service environment to look, feel and act like.

Some specific things to think about when developing a philosophy include identifying any beliefs in regard to:

- children's learning and development
- how you view children
- areas you feel are a priority

- the role of children, families, educators and others in the service and the community
- how the community interacts with the service
- theories and approaches
- aesthetics
- social aspects, such as self-image, self-esteem, social interactions and relationships
- diversity, inclusion, anti-bias curriculum and cultural capital
- what you wish to avoid in the setting
- who influences the program
- how the work group will function.

Philosophy and learning theory

The philosophy of your service will be informed by current learning theory. Some contemporary concepts encourage you to look beyond development and into the experiences of the child and their family through theories such as those explained in the following table.

Socio-cultural theory	Children learn culturally relevant concepts and practices as they participate in everyday life. Individual children learn in individual ways due to their cultural and family experiences. The best way for children to learn is to be provided with learning opportunities that link with these experiences.
Experiential learning	Learning occurs best when concrete experiences are used and these experiences are reflected on and then extended.
Play-based curriculum	Play comes to children naturally and is an enjoyable activity. Play is an excellent experience for learning. A play-based curriculum includes structured learning where children must complete specific activities for success, but this is a small part of the day. The process of an activity is most important with play-based curriculum; in this process a child's ideas, intrinsic motivation and learning from experience are focal.

Curriculum approaches

The following curriculum approaches put some philosophies about children's learning into practice.

Approach	View of the child	Role of the educator	Other tenets
Play-based curriculum	▶ Able to develop an understanding of concepts through play ▶ An active constructor of meaning ▶ Learns social and cultural contexts ▶ Is influenced by others and the environment	▶ Interacts with and observes children to gain information about their interests, skills and knowledge ▶ Responsive to children and their environment ▶ Seeks information from families to understand children ▶ Provides open-ended play opportunities ▶ Ensures the routine is unhurried ▶ Models and instructs as required ▶ Modifies play areas as interests change	▶ Play is pleasurable and enjoyable ▶ Play is a scaffolding experience ▶ Children connect their current knowledge and build on it in play to create new knowledge ▶ Children progress at their own pace based on the play they participate in ▶ Play allows the child to learn in a pleasant way
Reggio Emilia	▶ Social being and active agent in constructing their own learning ▶ Thoughts, ideas and questions are relevant and taken seriously	▶ Helps children to find meaning in their actions ▶ Helps children to take initiative ▶ Creates and maintains family–educator relationships ▶ Listens to, encourages and guides every child	▶ Environment is seen as the third teacher ▶ Visual arts are a way of exploring and making meaning of the world ▶ Relationships are a focus
Emergent curriculum	▶ Learns from real-life connections ▶ Learns concepts and develops positive dispositions towards learning through engagement in activities	▶ Puts plans in place to get learning started ▶ Responds to, expands on and builds on children's ideas ▶ Notices, invites, responds, provides, connects, confers and reflects	▶ Curriculum is based on child and educator interests, developmental tasks, things in the physical environment and people ▶ Plans provide children with choice and enable a wide range of interests to be catered for

Approach	View of the child	Role of the educator	Other tenets
Project approach	▶ Able to make choices and follow their interests ▶ Creates meaning through interactions with physical and social aspects of their world	▶ Promotes learning through encouraging ▶ Open and sensitive to the potential of a child	▶ Usually linked with Reggio Emilia or emergent curriculum ▶ Provides in-depth projects based on current interests (this is different to a theme approach where the adult decides on a theme and this is the focus of the entire room/week) ▶ Focuses on finding answers to questions that children or adults pose
Montessori	▶ Calm, happy, confident and capable	▶ Meets the child at their own level and allows them to develop at their own pace ▶ Encourages independence ▶ Encourages family involvement and parent education	▶ Prepared environment: activities have a purpose rather than being totally open-ended ▶ Activities are self-correcting; packing up and putting away is presented as part of the activity ▶ Holistic view of the child, not just an academic focus

Practice task 4

Locate a service philosophy and use this to complete the following questions.

1. Does the philosophy include the six NQS guiding principles? Explain how.

2. Explain how the philosophy is reflected in the service curriculum.

Summary

- Consultation is a process of information exchange. Parents and children need to be consulted to reflect on and evaluate the curriculum.
- If you communicate with children frequently in meaningful and authentic discussions, you should gain a genuine understanding of each child.
- Ongoing sharing of information between the service and parents contributes to strong, respectful relationships, as well as shared responsibility for monitoring the strengths and needs of the child.
- Ongoing consultation with parents and family members keeps you up to date with their needs and those of the child; your response to these needs is how they will measure your curriculum's effectiveness.
- A curriculum is all interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events that occur in the learning environment. It includes all the planned activities that are set out for children to participate in, and also the unplanned or spontaneous experiences.
- Planning helps you to determine best possible practice. It allows you to prepare and make available curriculum that is responsive to the children you work with. It also allows appropriate measures to be taken to achieve goals and develop specific skills.
- Your service's philosophy is informed by contemporary learning theory and is reflected in the curriculum.

Learning checkpoint 2
Designing and implementing curriculum in consultation with others

Part A

1. Develop a list of questions to ask parents about the current curriculum and learning environment.

   a. List **five** open-ended questions you could ask parents.

   The questions should allow the parents to identify:

   - the strengths of the current curriculum and learning environment
   - the weaknesses of the current curriculum and learning environment
   - whether the goals of the current curriculum are being met.

   b. Ask two parents the questions and document their responses.

c. Explain how you will address any required changes.

2. Develop a list of questions to ask children about the current curriculum and learning environment.

   a. List **five** open-ended questions you could ask children.

   The questions should allow the children to identify:

   - the strengths of the current curriculum and learning environment
   - the weaknesses of the current curriculum and learning environment
   - whether the goals of the current curriculum are being met.

   b. Ask two children the questions and document their responses.

c. Explain how you will address any required changes.

3. Access the philosophy of your service.
   a. Select **two** activities from the curriculum and describe how they reflect the philosophy.

   b. Identify the elements of the NQS and outcomes of the relevant learning framework that are being fulfilled by these activities.

Part B

Access the planning format (curriculum or program plan) used by a service, or develop one yourself. Explain how the format is used to present what is occurring in the curriculum. Describe how it:

- communicates the experiences and activities being implemented
- reflects the views and approaches of the service philosophy
- reflects the EYLF/MTOP outcomes by linking them with experiences and activities
- is a living document that you can add to as the children interact with the environment and learn through unplanned experiences.

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A **Collecting and analysing data**

3B **Creating goals**

3C **Designing learning experiences**

3D **Planning to monitor and assess learning**

Planning learning experiences for children

The curriculum is made up of learning experiences. These must be linked directly to the learning framework outcomes to ensure a holistic approach to the children's learning.

When designing learning experiences, you need to ensure they have a clear purpose and are meaningful.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
✓	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
✓	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

3A Collecting and analysing data

The first step in designing a learning experience is to collect and analyse data on each child. This data will enable you to identify their interests, strengths and goals.

The process of collecting data involves taking notice of how children are learning and developing. You should actively include children and families in information-gathering practices.

Element 1.1.2 of the NQS states: 'Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program'. To identify what these are, you need to observe the child in different contexts and identify how they react, who they interact with and what influences their learning and development.

Observation records

Records about the child are developed based on the observations you make. Observation records are created to provide the reader with information about the child that can be reflected on at a later date as evidence of their learning and development. Some approaches to recording information about children's learning and development are outlined below.

Secondary sources

Orientation provides an opportunity to collect information about children and their families. Most services update their documented information regularly, but the discussion you have with parents on a daily basis is where most of your important information will come from.

Key sources of secondary information are the child's parents and family members, your co-workers and specialists.

Diaries, journals, logs and communication books

Diaries, journals, logs and communication books form a communication link between the home and the service. These records may relate to one child or to an entire group of children. They can have a specific focus, such as all the child's interactions or their progress in toilet learning, but they are usually used to record general information and daily events. Sometimes this method can be used to create a 'story of the day'; parents appreciate knowing everything their child has been doing throughout the day.

Learning stories

Learning stories use narrative as a recording method. A narrative should be as engaging as possible. It may be a short story describing one event or it may follow through days or weeks of a project, development or investigation. A learning story may be added to by the child, parents and others who participate in the child's life.

The learning frameworks encourage educators to view children, the curriculum and their pedagogy in a creative and open manner. Learning stories fit this brief as they use a story form to focus on the child's interests and skills, and the journeys of their learning experiences.

A learning story demonstrates that you are able to do the following:

- Notice: observe children's learning.
- Recognise: strive to understand what you notice.
- Respond: put your understanding to use by providing for the child.

These three principles are necessary if you are to produce valuable records.

Learning stories lead you to identify objectives. Objectives are essential as they help you to plan sequentially and ensure your plans for each child demonstrate your high expectations, but are realistic and within their abilities.

Information and communication technology

Information and communication technology (ICT) offers effective tools for capturing observations that can be shared through audio, video, photos and text. ICT devices that may be most useful in education and care are mobile phones and computers. You might also use digital photo frames or digital cameras.

Children, parents and educators can readily become involved when these ICT mediums are used. Photographs in particular can be combined with written narratives to capture a learning event. Learning stories are sometimes developed in this way.

You can also use ICT to share information with parents via email or cloud-sharing services. This can be useful for sharing pictures and videos with busy parents who are unable to spend a lot of time in the service.

Questioning

Questioning is useful, particularly when working with older children. You can question children directly, or you can develop a questioning method that allows children to consider and reply in their own time. Not all questioning is useful; sometimes children give a response that is what they think you or their peers would like to hear.

Daily evaluation sheets are an example of a questioning method, as are surveys, questionnaires and forms. A daily evaluation sheet allows others to evaluate how the day went by asking specific questions, such as what activities were enjoyed most, what could be extended and how the curriculum could be improved. Not all children can contribute to these methods themselves; however, they will be competent in helping you decide what to record if you prompt them or ask open questions. You can also record children's responses to verbal questioning.

Children enjoy writing or drawing on an 'All about me' page. These pages contain spaces for the child to respond to questions such as:

- What am I good at?
- What are my favourite games?
- What are my favourite toys?
- What do I like doing?

Jottings

Jottings are brief notes taken throughout the day that help you remember something important or interesting you saw or heard. They might be written on a sticky note or in a pocket notebook. Not all documentation needs to be structured or well-displayed; some points of interest can be just as valuable when noted in a jotting.

Anecdotal information

Anecdotal information is a simple point of interest about a child's development, skill or interest. It is a brief description, often written from memory.

Anecdotal records don't record every detail of the environment or observed behaviour – the focus is on the point of interest that you observe. Anecdotal records can also be used to describe what is happening in the photographs that form part of your documentation. Anecdotal records can make up part of a diary, journal, log or communication book.

Samples of children's work

Keeping samples of children's work helps you to build a clear record of progression or sequence in their development, skills or interests. Collect originals or photocopy them to keep them on file; always ask the child before you take their piece of work and respect their wishes if they refuse. Samples can be used to make special portfolios that show a child's progress and become keepsakes for parents.

Webs

Webs are an excellent tool for recording brainstorming or for mapping out what you know about a child, group or learning topic. The structure of a web allows you to identify links and clearly map out aspects you are focusing on. By using a web with the topic of interest at its centre you can tease out the contents and identify what you and the children know already and what you would like to explore. This is a great way to start a project.

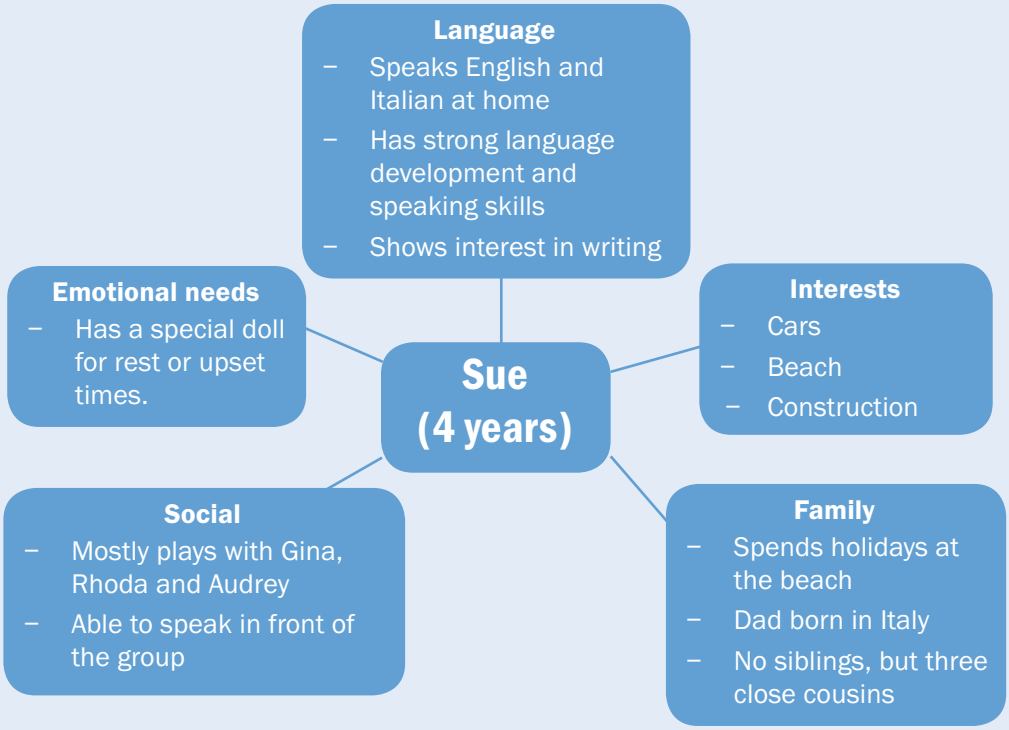
Webs may also be used to document your entire curriculum or plan, or they may document a range of information about a particular child or group. Again, the web allows you to link information and it can be as simple or complex as you feel is suited to your needs. You might record a child's:

- development
- interests
- links with others
- emerging skills
- strengths.

Example

Using a web

Weldon (an educator) decides to map some information about Sue using a web.



Weldon adds information he observes and also asks Sue's parents to add information. Weldon notices later that another child speaks Italian at home, so he links their two webs together. By using this web, Weldon can see all he knows about Sue at a glance.

Time samples

Time samples record observations taken at specified intervals of time: it may be every five minutes, half hour or at a set time each day. You can use a time sample to record patterns in a specific behaviour, interaction or interest.

Event samples and checklists

Event samples record your observations each time a particular event occurs. Specify which event is important to record and each time this event occurs, add a record of what happens before, during and after the situation. In an event sample you are able to consider the context and duration of the event. An event sample is an excellent tool for recording the behaviour of one or more children.

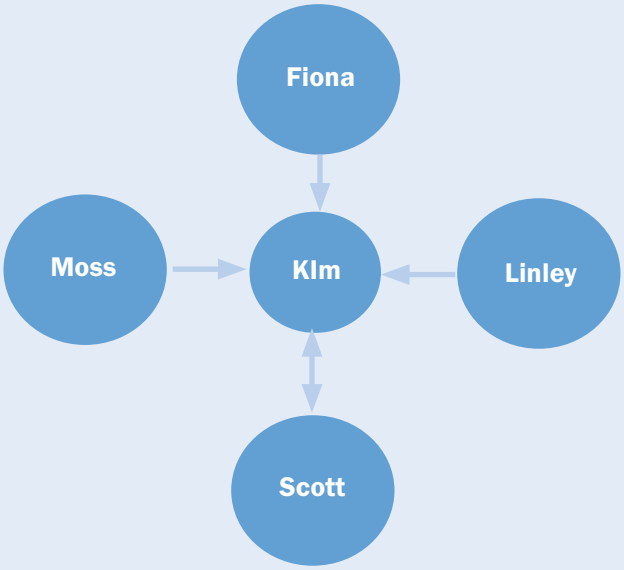
Sociograms

When it comes to recording children's interactions, sociograms are a useful and simple tool. A sociogram consists of a web-like connection map of who a child interacts with and who interacts with the child. The sociogram may record the interactions that centre around one child, or may record the interactional web that occurs in a group of children. You may use a sociogram to record emerging communication skills, new relationships or changing dynamics in a group.

Example

Using a sociogram

Kim's mum is concerned that Kim does not interact with other children while at the service. An educator uses a sociogram to collect interaction information and later adds a summary so Kim's mum can see how Kim participates socially.



Running records

Running records require some preparation. You will need to make sure you are available for the decided amount of time, usually somewhere between one minute and 10 minutes, depending on what you want to record. The purpose of a running record is to record everything that the child says and does during the recording period. It needs to contain information about the spaces the child plays in and details of each area of development.

This type of record is very demanding of your time because you need to continually observe and record; it also draws on your knowledge of child development because you are watching every action of the child.

Analysing information

Your aim when collecting information is to gather enough evidence for analysis, so that you can create a holistic profile of each child. Your collection of evidence must be sufficient for you to know each child's interests, strengths and goals.

Once you have enough evidence about each child and you have analysed the information, create a portrait of the child. Your further understanding of each child will enable you to provide appropriate learning environments.

Interests

When you focus your plans on the interests of children, they will be more engaged in what is occurring and will be developing skills they need in enjoyable ways.

Older children can help you to identify their interests, as they are able to tell you what they like to do. Young children need you to observe them and look for clues.

Signs that a child likes an activity might include that they:

- concentrate their whole attention on what they are doing
- participate for long periods of time on one activity
- use nonverbal language to demonstrate enjoyment; for example, smiling and pointing
- respond excitedly when the activity is available
- are resistant to sharing the activity with others.

Strengths

A child's strengths are usually linked to their interests. For example, if a child is interested in ball games, they will usually be good at ball-handling. Due to their interest, they feel motivated to practise the necessary skills.

Include activities that reflect children's interests so that they can develop and practise skills. Conversely, if a child needs to develop a particular skill, you can encourage them by integrating the skill into an activity the child is interested in.

Goals

Goals allow you to develop a clear direction and to share this direction with others. When you identify goals for each child you are ensuring that your plans for learning focus on the progress you want for the child.

A goal is a statement of what you want to achieve. Goals need to be clear, but they don't need to be very detailed. They just need to lead you from the recorded observation to the outcome you set for the child. The following are examples of goals:

- For Johan to interact during meal times
- For Millie to use the toilet independently
- For Huong to write her name

Example

Integrating skills practice into an activity of interest

Madison, an educator, knows that Terence enjoys playing in the block area. She also knows that Terence could benefit from interacting socially with other children as he usually plays alone. Madison adds a train set to the block area. She then invites two other children into the block play and supports the three children to talk about how they might use the trains and blocks. The three children are soon building together, discussing plans. Later, Madison hears them engaging in dramatic play – Terence is taking orders and delivering blocks on his train so the other two children can build a shop.

Linking to the learning framework outcomes

To link your knowledge of a child to the EYLF/MTOP outcomes, you should first identify the interests, strengths and goals of the child. When you know what the focus is, you can use the EYLF/MTOP outcomes to identify what actions you need to take.

The examples provided as part of the EYLF/MTOP outcome information can also be used as evidence that children are working toward an outcome or have achieved skills relating to an outcome. You are able to add to the examples of evidence so that, over time, you have a collection of information that links individual children's learning and progress to EYLF/MTOP outcomes.

Example

Linking a goal to the learning frameworks

Madison, an educator, has identified that Terence would benefit from more social interaction. This is her broad goal for him. She can see that the learning framework outcome that most closely represents Terence's need is Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

Madison re-reads Outcome 2 and notices that there is a sub-outcome relating to Terence's needs: 'Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation'.

When Madison reads the examples that demonstrate that children are progressing in this area, she notices that Terence does not demonstrate any of these actions. She therefore feels confident that she is on the right track in thinking he needs additional support.

The following table demonstrates how Madison uses the learning outcomes to connect Terence's development with goals.

Interests and strengths	Block play
Needs or goals	Social interaction and involvement with other children
EYLF/MTOP outcome	Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
EYLF/MTOP sub-outcome	Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities, and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation
Evidence if using EYLF	Children participate in reciprocal relationships. Terence has not been demonstrating this.
Evidence if using MTOP	Children cooperate with others and negotiate roles and relationships in play and leisure opportunities. Terence has not been demonstrating this.

Practice task 5

Ava is interested in dinosaurs and really likes playing with toy dinosaurs in the sandpit.

Fill in the following table with information about Ava's interest and how you could link it to a relevant EYLF outcome.

Interests and strengths	
Needs or goals	
EYLF outcome	
EYLF sub-outcome	
Evidence from outcome	

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3B Creating goals

Approved frameworks can be used to help clarify specific objectives, the requirements of the learning environment, the role of the educator, and the assessment and evaluation methods to use. This clarification is essential when designing learning experiences to foster children's learning and development.

Specific objectives

The information you have collected and analysed will enable you to set specific objectives for the children. These will flow on from the assessments you have prepared. Your target is to have each outcome of the learning frameworks represented in your curriculum. This means that a broad range of information must be collected and meaningful directions must be set.

Objectives are based on the small steps it takes for a child to move from the situation they are in now to the situation where they are achieving the goal. Objectives are based on the scaffolding experiences you provide – experiences that help a child to learn or practise new skills. Objectives need to be short and simple. An objective should lead the child to the next step in achieving the goal you identified.

Two ways of developing objectives are outlined in the following.

The SMART approach

An objective developed using this method should have the following attributes:

- Specific – it must specify what you want to achieve.
- Measurable – it must be easy to tell whether the objectives are being met or not.
- Achievable – the objectives you set must be within reach.
- Realistic – it must be realistically achievable with the resources you have.
- Time – it must be set to be achieved within a specific time frame.

Task analysis

This is a method for breaking down tasks into small steps so you can identify how the child may complete the task. You then use this step-by-step approach to identify realistic objectives for the child.

If the goals and objectives are general and difficult to measure, you may feel that you are not achieving anything and that your program lacks focus. For example, the goal 'For Patrick to increase his fine motor skills' is not useful because it does not focus on a specific skill, state how the skill is to be developed, or give a time line to achieve the goal. Creating non-specific targets are not useful as they provide no direction or focus.

Achieving a goal may take weeks, months or most of the year, but an objective is set with the expectation that it will be achieved within the planning period, which for most services is one to two weeks.

Each service will use outcomes, goals and objectives differently; your experience in different settings will help you develop ideas that make sense to you and enable you to create responsive settings.

To develop an objective from the learning framework outcomes you have identified, try the following:

1. Link your analysis to a specific EYLF/MTOP outcome or sub-outcome.
2. Develop a goal based on what you want the child to learn.
3. Develop an objective.

The following table sets out how this might be done.

EYLF outcome	Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners
EYLF sub-outcome	Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
Evidence from outcome	Children express wonder and interest in their environments. Children are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning.
Goal	For Leo to know more about dinosaurs.
Objectives	For Leo to learn the names and eating habits of two dinosaurs and recognise the characteristics of each dinosaur. One dinosaur will be a herbivore and the other a carnivore.

The learning environment

The NQS provides services with guidelines for child education and care. These guidelines offer information for providing responsive learning environments. Quality Area 3 in particular focuses on the physical environment; it ensures it is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

Learning environments must reflect learning framework practice by being holistic, responsive, play-focused, abundant in learning opportunities and culturally competent.

Watch this video about providing a stimulating learning environment.

Holistic

To create a holistic learning environment, you must pay attention to all developmental aspects:

- physical
- social
- emotional
- spiritual
- cognitive
- linguistic.

You must also recognise and respond to connections between children, families, the community and the natural environment.

The learning frameworks have been created to ensure that a holistic approach is achieved. If you aim to have each of the five EYLF/MTOP outcomes represented in your plan of experiences, with as many specific outcomes as possible, you will be designing a holistic program.

You could use a checklist to ensure you are successful in this area. Another option is to use a planning format that represents the EYLF/MTOP outcomes.

Responsive

Your plans need to be adapted as the day progresses. You will start off with an environment that is prepared and meets needs and interests and, as the day unfolds, the children's interests, ideas and learning will inform the modification of the service play space.

Play-focused

The learning environment will recognise and provide for play that is voluntary, pleasurable, symbolic, active, process-oriented and intrinsically motivated. Play provides a way for children to integrate all their new experiences into their rapidly developing minds, bodies, emotions and social skills.

Abundant in learning opportunities

Learning opportunities will occur through play, planned experiences and intentional teaching. They will also be spontaneous and natural. Children are continually learning from their environment and the people around them. The curriculum should be flexible and allow children to adjust the environment to their particular learning needs at the time.

Culturally competent

It is essential to build cultural competence – the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people of different cultures. This involves understanding your own culture as well as the cultures of others. It means acknowledging the similarities and differences between cultures, and breaking down stereotypes and biases. Children can learn to do this through the environment you create.

Being aware of your own world view helps you adopt a positive attitude towards others, gain knowledge of different cultural practices and develop cross-cultural communication skills to use in your workplace and beyond.

Your role

Your role as an educator is an active one; you facilitate learning and make judgments about the learning environment. You must ensure that the learning environment is responsive to children, families and the community. This ability requires you to understand and apply theories of child development and frameworks such as the EYLF, MTOP and NQS.

Your role also requires the ability to observe, interpret and plan for children's behaviour and development, integrating aspects of each child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development into the curriculum.

In addition to being responsive to children, you need to be an ongoing learner. You need to regularly reflect on your practice, both independently and in collaboration with other educators.

Assessment and evaluation methods

There are two main assessment or evaluation methods you can use to summarise what you find through collecting records about individual children. They are outlined in the following information.

Portfolio assessment

A portfolio is a collection of work that serves as evidence of a child's learning and development. The collection will be developed with the child, their family and other educators in order to form a holistic view of the child's learning. It may be presented in a variety of ways, such as a folder, book, envelope, computer file or website.

The aim of the portfolio is to keep records together for others to view, comment on and add to. A typical portfolio might contain samples of work, learning stories, anecdotal records and journal or communication book entries. A portfolio used for assessment should include examples demonstrating the child's strengths, learning, relationships and interests.

An effective portfolio assessment should:

- be ongoing
- provide a holistic view of the child
- give the child the opportunity to reflect on their progress
- clearly outline the related development or outcomes
- use a range of recording methods
- include the voice of children, peers, families and other professionals, if applicable.

Formative assessment

The aim of formative assessment is to monitor learning so that a child's strengths and weaknesses can be identified. Formative assessment looks at what the child is doing and identifies how it fits with development, learning and behaviour. It takes points of evidence and gives them meaning.

Formative assessment is commonly used as part of a learning story. The story tells you what occurred, then the formative assessment tells you what this means in relation to development, learning outcomes, dispositions or other important information.

Practice task 6

Read the case study, and then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Hayden, an educator, notices that Marshall is learning to cut with scissors. He plans how he will help Marshall cut with scissors by first completing a task analysis. To do this he breaks the task of using scissors down into small steps:

1. Hold the scissors in the correct manner.
2. Open and close the scissors independently.
3. Cut snips on the edge of the paper while the educator holds the paper.
4. Hold own paper and snip the edges.
5. Cut across the page independently.
6. Cut along printed lines (straight and curved).

Hayden decides that because Marshall has not used scissors before he should concentrate on completing the first two parts of the task first. Hayden sets a goal and then an objective for this week's plan.

Goal: For Marshall to cut with scissors competently by the end of Term 1.

Objective: For Marshall to hold scissors correctly and open and shut them independently by 7 March (end of week one).

1. Which EYLF outcome is relevant to Marshall learning to cut with scissors?

2. Which EYLF sub-outcome is relevant?

3. What evidence from the outcome shows Hayden's learning links with this experience?

3C Designing learning experiences

The learning experiences that you provide for individuals or groups of children need to be designed to foster holistic learning. To ensure children feel the environment is stable, there also needs to be continuity of learning and transitions.

Fostering holistic learning

Holistic learning is about ensuring that all aspects of the child are responded to, nurtured and extended. Each child should feel a sense of belonging due to the methods you implement to address their interests, strengths, abilities and needs.

Holistic learning also includes the way you help children to see themselves as connected to others and the environment. A holistic curriculum will address all of the learning framework outcomes.

Providing transitions

Transitions are times when things change. A child's day is filled with transitions, and these are often times that are difficult for them to manage. Some transition times that children experience include:

- home to service
- play to snack or meal time
- meal or snack time to play
- play to sleep or rest time
- play to group time
- play to bathroom routine.

Transitions will also include life changes, such as the child moving from full-time home care to service care, or from service to kindergarten or preschool.

A daily timetable should comprise a variety of routine practices linked together to meet the needs of all. This linking or moving from one activity to another is called a transition, and may involve interrupting play to move to a routine activity or vice versa.

Smooth transitions are important to ensure children feel secure and respected. Well-planned transitions are flexible, cater for individual needs and keep the program relaxed and enjoyable. The following table outlines some strategies to support you in developing and implementing transition times.

Alert children to approaching transitions	Provide a warning to children that a transition is approaching. Children often become engrossed in play and it shows respect when you give them a warning that they will need to stop in a few minutes.
Issue simple directions	Use clear and simple directions so children know what you expect. Remember that young children can only remember one or two instructions at a time.
Allow for activities to continue later	If possible, allow children to finish an activity they are engrossed in or provide a means for them to continue it later. It is a sign that you value the children's work when you allow them to save what they are doing and return to it later. You may need to consider storage or how you use spaces to enable this.

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Stagger transitions	Consider whether the group size is appropriate to the activity you are moving to. You may find that you only need to move some children to a new routine, activity or space, and others can come later or do not need to participate at all. You may also be able to eliminate a structured transition by using progressive techniques that allow children to choose to move to a routine or activity by themselves.
Minimise waiting time	Exclude or reduce waiting times and be prepared with ways to fill unexpected waiting times. Not only is waiting wasted time, but it is also time that demonstrates you or your colleagues are not well prepared. The younger the group of children you work with, the less appropriate it is for your routines or transitions to include waiting.
Be prepared	Preparation is the best way to minimise waiting times and keep your stress level low. By having your materials, space, staff and activities ready to go, you ensure the plan goes smoothly. Preparation allows for flexibility as well – the better prepared you are, the easier it is to cope with on-the-spot changes or mishaps. Communicate with the person who prepares the daily plan and ask if any special preparation is required for upcoming activities. Have a look at the plan when you arrive for the day to see what preparation you can assist with. When you are implementing a spontaneous activity, you will not have this preparation in place. If possible, allow the children to participate in the preparation of required materials and resources – this will get the activity started right away and eliminate waiting time.
Allocate responsibility to children	Allow children to participate and be independent when possible. Educators often forget that the service exists for the children and that the environment is meant to give them a sense of belonging. Educators often become stressed about what needs to be done and forget children are capable of taking on responsibilities such as setting up or packing away, particularly if they are supported, encouraged and thanked.

Managing waiting time

Waiting is one aspect of transitions that needs to be managed carefully; otherwise, children may become bored, distracted or disruptive. It may be difficult to settle them into the next activity once it is ready. Educators can plan to minimise waiting time in the timetable, but need to be prepared for unexpected waiting time and understand how it affects different age groups.

School-age children experience short periods of waiting during their school day and so understand the expectations. Their stage of development is at a level where they have the skills to manage this situation. This doesn't mean it is acceptable for you to expect school-age children to wait; rather, you need to explain why they are waiting. Also consider whether they can be constructive in the waiting time. For example, they may be able to help pack up or set up rather than waiting for staff to do this.

Children below school age have different needs and skills. Preschoolers and toddlers need to be energetic and involved with you and their peers. They have a limited understanding of time, yet still understand what is coming next in a routine. Children of this age see waiting as time for them to amuse themselves, sometimes in the form of behaviour you may not appreciate or encourage.

When an infant cries to tell you they are hungry, sleepy or lonely, they expect to be fed, put to bed, or hugged and played with immediately. They have no concept of time or understanding of the tasks you need to complete to prepare yourself and the environment. They simply have the skills to know what they want and then alert you to this fact.

Involving children in set-up and pack-up

By the time children are preschool age, they are able to set up and pack away most of the activities and experiences themselves with guidance. The more responsibility and control children have over their own environment, the greater their sense of security and belonging. Therefore, allocating responsibility is an ideal way to help children embrace transition times.

Some ways you can enable children to set up include:

- talking through your needs
- working with them to complete the set-up
- providing photos or diagrams of how you would like the set-up to look
- allowing the child to choose how the set-up will look
- giving guidelines and allowing the child to set up according to these.

Include tidying up as a valuable learning time rather than a chore that must be completed quickly.

There are many things a child can learn at this time, such as the following:

- Classifying or sorting: organising things into containers and shelves.
- Placement: putting things in the correct place.
- Care and respect for the environment and equipment: modelling by educators assists children to gain this skill; by helping to care for the equipment the children feel ownership and responsibility for it.
- Cooperation: working with others to achieve a task.
- Responsibility: children can be responsible for the task, for leading others, for equipment and for managing their own time and space.
- Independence: developing skills so that they gain greater competence as they grow.

Providing continuity of learning

There are specific types of activities and experiences that should be offered to children at all times. The context of your service will determine these, but many educators believe that the following should remain constant:

- dramatic play area
- art area
- active play space
- quiet space.

When these spaces are always available, children's holistic needs are being met. This does not mean that the dramatic play space will always look exactly the same, or that the art space will have the same materials; instead, these spaces should provide familiarity for the children in terms of their use.

In addition to these constant areas, you will need to provide familiar routines and timetables. Avoid change for the sake of it and always involve the children in modifying the environment.

Example

Modifying the plan as necessary

Andy, an educator, modifies the play space when an activity or experience needs extension or is not of interest.

Monday

The children do not use the play dough table at all. Andy decides to change this activity, linking it to a child's culture and lifestyle. Ben visited an Aboriginal reserve on the weekend and is talking about what he saw, so Andy decides to include Aboriginal painting. He asks Ben for ideas about materials and how these might be set up.

At story time, Andy reads a book illustrated with Aboriginal dot paintings. He asks the children if they would like to try making dot paintings this week instead of using play dough. The children agree. Jenny asks, 'Will we be able to do play dough again?' Andy suggests they set up play dough again after everyone has had a go at dot painting and Jenny agrees.

Andy sets a new objective related to EYLF Outcome 2:

- For the children to explore Aboriginal art at the craft table using sticks, earth-coloured paint and black paper

Tuesday

Andy notices the children are playing shop in home corner. He asks if they would like to set up a shop to use for the rest of the week. The children like the idea and they help Andy to set up the space and add what they need. Some additional craft activities emerge because the children want to make a cash register and money.

Andy sets new objectives relating to Outcome 2:

- For the children to interact with each other using the actions of buying and selling in the home corner shop at play time
- For the children to choose and use available craft materials to create a cash register and money during activity time

Wednesday

The Aboriginal dot painting is not that popular, but a child starts to use their fingers to paint. Andy puts up posters of Aboriginal artwork that uses symbols.

Andy modifies his objective from Monday:

- For the children to create artwork during activity time using a range of painting mediums, including fingers, sticks, earth-coloured paint and black paper

Thursday

The outdoor obstacle course is not being used.

Andy sets a new goal related to Outcomes 2 and 5:

- For the children to participate in planning the outdoor environment

He also sets an objective:

- For a children's planning group to use the materials in the outdoor storage shed to develop a new, safe, five-activity obstacle course, which will be represented using the computer planning program

Andy sits down with the children who usually use the obstacle course and they set up a new course. Andy encourages them to draw their idea for an obstacle course onto a plan of the yard. As they place each piece of equipment, Andy asks the children whether they can identify any safety issues.

Andy focuses the goal on Outcome 3:

- For the children to become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing

Andy's new objective linked to this:

- For the planning group to work together using brainstorming, experimentation and negotiation to develop a safe outdoor obstacle course

Friday

Andy introduces a theme based on his own interest in athletics. He is going to participate in the local community athletics carnival in a month's time, and would like to get the children interested in the event.

His goal is based on Outcome 2:

- For the children to develop a sense of belonging to communities

His first objective is to introduce his interest in athletics during group time using a range of materials and discussion so that children will understand the community event about to take place.

In group time, Andy tells the children that he has been training for an athletics carnival, and explains what that is. He talks about physical fitness and training, including eating healthy food. He shows them photos and videos of athletics events.

Andy gauges the children's interests in the topic and identifies five children who seem interested. He decides to meet with them next week and discuss activity ideas based on this interest.

He sets a new objective:

- For interested children to meet to develop a fitness training plan that includes athletic events (stretching, running, jumping, throwing); this will be set up outside with posters showing the different elements

All children will be encouraged to participate in the training during play time if they show an interest.

Andy is spontaneous in many of his planning decisions and needs to document these in his review of the plan for the week. He also has some ideas ready from his planning time:

- Monday: Andy knew that Ben visited an Aboriginal reserve on the weekend and made sure some appropriate supplies were available.
- Tuesday: Andy planned an extension of the home corner relating to numbers and counting. The shop fits this brief, plus some additional interest ideas.
- Wednesday: Andy made a spontaneous decision to modify an activity to reflect children's interests in using different tools with paint.
- Thursday: Andy knows that the popularity of the obstacle course was declining and planned to ask a group of children to redesign it if needed.
- Friday: Andy planned this group time. He collected posters and a video of people participating in athletics events.

Andy's planning included time for meetings, collecting materials, and spontaneous discussions and extensions. Rather than simply planning a range of activities and sticking to it, Andy was prepared to follow up on interests as they arose, and involved children in planning and implementation.

Documenting the experience

When you are practised in implementing plans, you will automatically think of the things you need to prepare, think about, and tell others to gain the best possible result. It is wise to write out these points and take your time to ensure you have considered all aspects.

Individual experience

When planning an experience for an individual child, you need to use your observations to plan and provide reasons for the experience you are planning. This experience should clearly allow the child to progress in a certain area of their development. The following table shows an example of the points you will need to consider when planning an experience.

Individual experience	
Child	Toby
Age of child	Four and a half years
Experience	Farm animals in sand tray
Observation record to support experience choice (attach record if not a written record)	Toby remained in book corner after group time and looked through a book showing pictures of farm animals. He was heard telling Sasha that one farm animal was a horse and it ran fast on sand at Pa's house.
Date observed	13 March 2018
Why this observation encouraged you to plan this experience	Toby demonstrated an interest in farm animals, particularly horses, and he knew some facts about them.
Objective	For Toby to use the horses in the sand and talk about the different things he knows about horses while he plays.

EYLF links	Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.
Materials required	▶ Sand and sand tray for indoors ▶ Model farm animals of various types, particularly horses ▶ Pebbles, bark and wooden blocks that could be used as fences
Strategies used to make the experience engaging and accessible	▶ Place near wall so only two children can have access. ▶ Ensure the tray is not overcrowded – the horses should be able to 'run' around the tray.
Role of educators	▶ Talk to the children about the animals. ▶ Ask open questions; for example: 'What do you think the horses do on the farm?', 'What do you think the horses eat?' ▶ Ask Toby why the horses run on the sand. ▶ Ask, 'Are they a particular kind of horse?'

Group experience

A group experience requires a similar form of planning, but here you have further steps to consider and prepare for. When you take time to think about these aspects of the group activity it will be a richer learning experience. Over time your planning skills will occur more automatically.

The following is an example of how to format a group experience plan.

Group experience	
Group name	Red group
Age of group	Five years
Experience	Similarities and differences – Human bingo
Observation record to support experience choice (attach record if not a written record)	This is a new grouping of children. The children are from different cultural backgrounds with different characteristics. I have overheard some children saying that other children cannot play with them because they are a girl, too small, don't know the rules, etc.
Date observed	13–15 March 2018
Why this observation encouraged you to plan this experience	I would like the children to become familiar with each other and also think about what they have in common with each other.

What is the value of this experience?	▶ Creative – expressing movement to music ▶ Social and emotional – identifying physical similarities and differences and interacting with different children, encouraging new relationships ▶ Linguistic – considering words that describe personal characteristics ▶ Cognitive – matching self to others, memory, how the game is played ▶ Physical – using bodies to move to music
Objective	For the children to become familiar with each other, knowing their similarities and differences.
Materials required	▶ Plenty of open space ▶ CD player ▶ CD with short excerpts of music – different genres and tempos
Strategies used to foster creativity during the experience	▶ Ensure availability of space and time for children to participate fully. ▶ Play music for long enough for children to settle into a dance style.
Strategies for settling	I will use my usual call to group time by shaking the tambourine until everyone is seated. Once the children are on the mat we will sign the words 'Hello' and 'Welcome' to each other in Auslan as we learnt in another group time.
Introduction	We will first play a game of matching to me, where I will call out, 'Who has the same hair colour as me?' and so on, asking the children to raise their hands to mean 'yes'.
Main experience	Children dance to music. I stop the music and call out a characteristic and the children group themselves according to the characteristic. Each time I play music I will ask children to move to the music using their ideas of how the music makes them feel. When the music stops I will call out a personal characteristic – I will start with, 'Everyone from red group stand together' so that they begin in a large group. Then I will ask them to group together based on characteristics such as eye colour, hair colour, clothing, height and gender. This will help me get a good range of groupings. If children have difficulty choosing movements to the music being played, I will encourage them to follow another child or give some suggestions.
Conclusion	I will ask about the similarities and differences with questions like: 'Who liked being different to everyone else?', 'Who thought they were very similar to someone else? Why?'

Practice task 7

1. List the experiences currently presented in the indoor environment in a service.

2. Do each of these experiences form part of the constant experience areas in the environment?

3. What are the outcomes and objectives of each of the experiences?

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4. Identify whether the indoor learning environment is providing a holistic approach. Explain your answer.

5. Use one of the formats to plan individual or group experiences from this section to collect details about one experience being offered.

3D Planning to monitor and assess learning

Before you implement your plan of experiences, you should prepare ways to monitor and assess their success. The monitoring and assessment process is another way to gain information about children and to find out more about how they learn.

Both planned and unplanned experiences need to be considered for assessment.

Planned and unplanned experiences

Planned teaching and learning might be based on observation records that you have collected and analysed, or it may build on an interest you notice and take time to prepare before offering it to the children. It includes the intentional teaching you provide, the group experiences you develop and the way you deliberately set up the environment, interact with children and demonstrate skills and games.

Unplanned experiences are spontaneous. They arise when you notice an event or interest and decide to develop it into an experience of greater value. Opportunities for unplanned learning usually occur when you are monitoring and assessing the current experiences and notice a need for action.

Example

Spontaneous teaching

Tonya, an educator, is listening to two children at the swings while she supervises the outdoor play area. She hears them arguing about who gets to go first and who has to push. Tonya uses this unplanned event to implement a plan to teach the children how to use their legs to swing themselves.

She asks, 'Jenny and Ben, would you like me to show you how to push yourselves so you can both swing together?' They say, 'Yes!' and some other children gather around to watch as well.

Monitoring and assessing

When implementing activities and learning experiences, there are several aspects to monitor and assess. This process will help you identify whether the learning experience is relevant and whether it meets the needs of the children, families and service.

Aspects to monitor and assess are outlined in the following table.

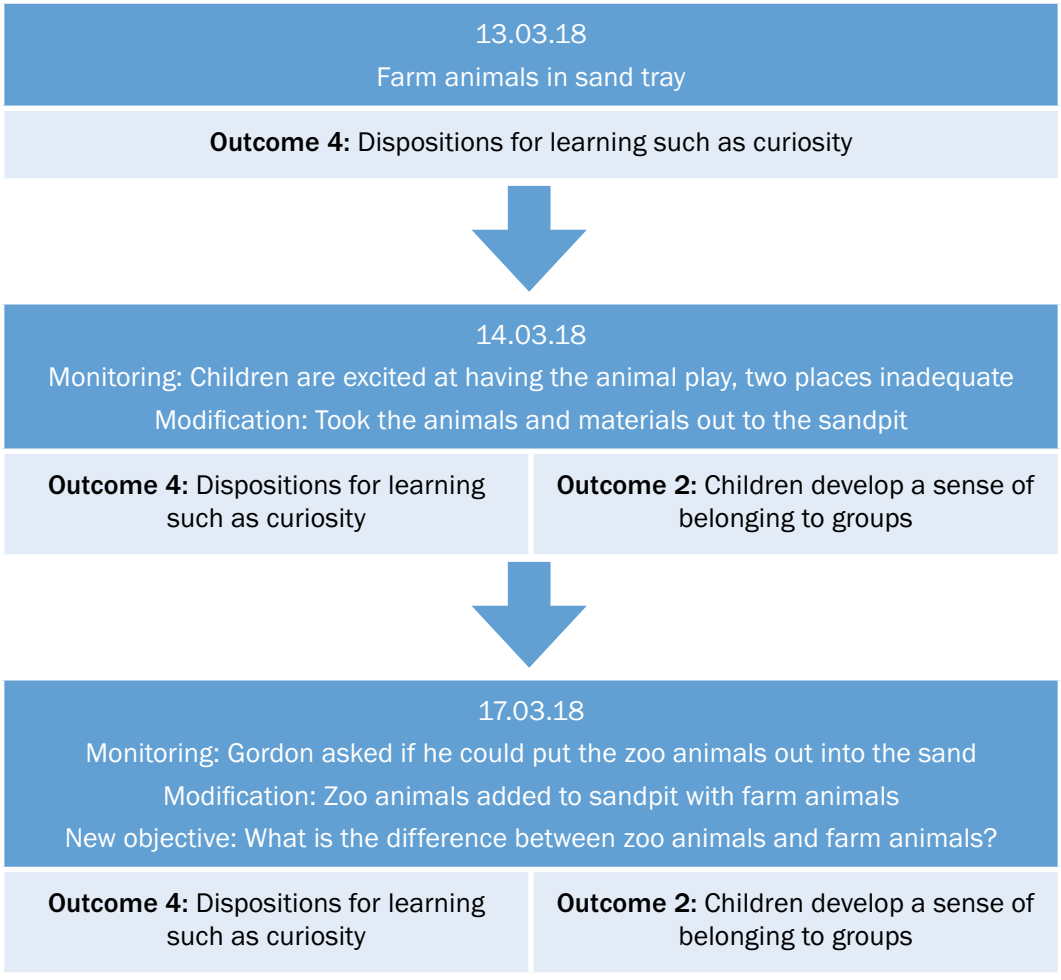
Spontaneous interests	Take observation records when children show a spontaneous interest. This information may be used to extend experiences into other areas.
Extensions and changes	How did you change or extend the experience on the spot? Use this information to clarify needs and find out how children prefer activities to be used or set up.
Effectiveness	What worked and what didn't work? Identify whether the experience met the objective set: ▶ Was it age-appropriate? ▶ Did it help the child to work toward an EYLF/MTOP outcome? ▶ Did you provide enough props and equipment? ▶ What can you do to extend on the experience?

Another perspective	Seek another person's opinion. Ask a colleague or parent who observed the activity. If the activity was recorded, ask a supervisor or mentor to watch the video. Find out their thoughts on the value of the experience and how you provided it, how you might improve this experience and whether they thought the experience was suitable.
Children's ideas	Ask children questions about the activity and their investigations. Use open-ended questions and active listening techniques, and encourage problem-solving.
New ideas and activities of high interest	Did the children's interest and enthusiasm coincide with your expectations, or were you surprised? Consider how you can include the children's choices and ideas in experiences that relate to EYLF/MTOP outcomes.
Principles and practices of the learning framework	Consider whether the experience related to the EYLF/MTOP as you originally planned. Were you able to implement your philosophy and pedagogy? What did you learn about teaching practice that you can apply to the next experience?

Documenting monitoring and assessment

Many educators will include space for monitoring and assessing experiences on their planning format or template. This keeps the information together and also represents how an experience evolves from planning through implementation to assessment.

The following are two different ways to record a learning experience: one through a web plan, the other using the learning experience record.



Learning experience record	
Outcome 4: Dispositions for learning such as curiosity **Outcome 2:** Children develop a sense of belonging to groups	**Objective:** For Toby to use the horses in the sand and talk about the different things he knows about horses while he plays. **New objective (17.03.18):** What are the differences between zoo animals and farm animals?
Experience: Farm animals in sand tray	
Principle: ▶ High expectations and equity	**Practice:** ▶ Responsiveness to children ▶ Learning through play ▶ Intentional teaching ▶ Learning environments
Modifications and evaluations 14.03.18 Monitoring: Children are excited at having the animal play, two places inadequate Modification: Took the animals and materials out to the sandpit 17.03.18 Monitoring: Gordon asked if he could put the zoo animals into the sand Modification: Zoo animals added to sandpit with farm animals	

Practice task 8

There are many methods and templates for monitoring and assessing experiences.

1. Research and provide **two** examples of methods or templates.
2. Describe how each template represents the following:
   a. Information about the child or children

   b. Objectives

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c. EYLF outcomes

d. EYLF principles and practices

e. A holistic approach

f. Details of the learning experience

3. For any information not represented in each format, how might it be monitored? Explain a process.

Summary

- Children rely on you and other educators to create safe and appropriate learning environments.
- Collecting data, information and evidence helps you take note of when children are learning and developing.
- To link your knowledge of each child to the EYLF/MTOP outcomes, you should first identify the interests, strengths and goals of the child. This information is obtained through the analysis of recorded data. When you know what the focus is, you can use the EYLF/MTOP outcomes to identify what actions you need to put into place.
- Once you have linked information to the EYLF/MTOP outcomes and set goals, you need to plan to put experiences in place and to develop a learning environment.
- Planned experiences and spontaneous activities that arise from interests can lead you to the development of objectives. On other occasions you will identify objectives and these will lead you to appropriate activities.
- Prior to implementing your plan of experiences, you should prepare for monitoring and assessing their success. The monitoring and assessment process is another way to gain information about children and to find out more about how they learn.

Learning checkpoint 3
Planning learning experiences for children

Part A

1. Design and implement **five** experiences, each linked to a different EYLF/MTOP outcome:
   - Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
   - Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
   - Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
   - Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners
   - Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Document each planned experience using a table similar to the following.

Planned experience	
Child or group	▶ *Name of child or group or confidential identification*
Age of child or group	▶ *Age range of all children participating*
Experience	▶ *What the experience is called and what it involves*
Observation record to support experience choice Date observed	▶ *Records of observation that you take to support this experience choice and the date that they were taken. These may be attached if they do not fit into the format.* ▶ *Ensure that you have collected enough relevant information to demonstrate the need for the learning you are focused on.*
Analysis	▶ *What do the records tell you about the child? Are there interests, strengths or goals?* ▶ *Why did the records encourage you to plan this experience?* ▶ *What makes you want to focus on the records you have chosen above?* ▶ *Which of the five EYLF/MTOP outcomes does the observation relate to?* ▶ *In which of the specific sub-outcomes is this child progressing?*
EYLF/MTOP links	▶ *Which EYLF/MTOP outcome does the experience relate to?* ▶ *Are the EYLF or MTOP principles and practices linked? How?*
Objective	▶ *Set an objective that you will attempt to achieve through the experience.*
Materials required	▶ *What materials are required to carry out the experience and how did you check they are available?*

Presentation of learning environment	▶ *Describe, sketch or attach a photo of your learning environment set-up.*
Role of educators	▶ *What specific actions do you want educators to take during the experience?*
Continuity of learning	▶ *How have you considered this in the planning and implementation of this experience?* ▶ *What will you do to incorporate the experience into the current play and learning environment?*
Continuity of transitions	▶ *How have you considered transitions in the planning and implementation of this experience?* ▶ *How will you ensure timetabled transitions are not affected by the experience?*

Part B

Research the methods a service might use for documenting the monitoring and assessment of learning experiences.

1. Collect samples of these methods (provide examples if no sample is available).

   Complete the following checklist, assessing whether the method allows you to record the following interests about experiences:

   - ☐ Spontaneous interests that arise during the experience
   - ☐ Learning that is noticed
   - ☐ New ideas and activities of high interest that arise
   - ☐ Extensions, changes or modifications that are made
   - ☐ Changes or additions in relation to the way the learning framework outcomes, principles or practices are linked to the experience
   - ☐ Changes to objectives
   - ☐ What worked and what didn't work
   - ☐ The opinions of other people
   - ☐ The ideas of children who participate in the experience

2. Write a brief explanation of how these methods are used in the evaluation process.

Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

4A Preparing for learning

4B Building confident learners

4C Monitoring and reflecting on children's learning

Implementing learning experiences to foster children's learning and development

When implementing your curriculum, your preparation will help to ensure you have adequate materials and resources, and that all relevant aspects of the environment are prepared for use. The environment should be set up attractively, and the resources need to be readily available in good working order. By preparing for the learning that will take place, you are building a setting that will help children to become confident learners.

Watch this video about fostering children's development.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
✓	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
✓	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
✓	Learning through play	Learning through play
✓	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

4A Preparing for learning

When preparing the environment for learning, you need to identify and access all materials and resources that you will need to implement the planned experiences in the indoor and outdoor play spaces.

Obtaining materials and resources

In order to implement the learning experience, you may require:

- transport
- equipment
- venue
- materials
- curriculum/learning materials
- staff
- food and drink.

These resources may not always be readily available. As part of your planning you may need to:

- purchase materials or place them on a purchasing list
- reserve or book materials or spaces
- borrow from internal or external sources
- employ staff
- engage specialist staff with particular skills or availability
- involve parents
- involve volunteers.

Many educators find it useful to pull together their needed resources well in advance as they plan for the next period of time. You might:

- put together a planning pack
- place your resources in a specific area
- make a list.

When choosing materials and resources for play, you must ensure that they are practical, have a definite purpose in the set-up, and are adequate in quantity and quality. You need to be mindful of their purpose and what you aim to achieve by having materials and resources out for the children. Too many resources at any given experience can cause confusion and frustration due to clutter. Overcrowding the activity area will limit your ability to set up an inviting, child-focused and aesthetically pleasing experience.

Setting up the physical learning environment

The physical environment should be set up using materials that suit the needs of the children. The materials should be attractive to the children and carefully placed to allow ease of use. This will help to ensure that the children are engaged with their learning environment.

When children are involved in activities that are open-ended and stimulate a response, they are led into an experience which may bring out new skills and knowledge, and create reasons to interact with others as part of their learning.

To set up a physical learning environment that can capture attention, stimulate a response and engage children, you must:

- be prepared for the children to adapt materials or change the experience
- support experimentation
- be prepared to add more materials
- provide for all possibilities; for example, cleaning up mess and slippery floors.

Aesthetics

Some people like an environment with lots of clear space and other people prefer a lived-in, homely feeling. Your challenge is to balance these needs to create an environment that the majority of children find stimulating.

When considering the aesthetics of your environment, consider the following aspects of the room and spaces you are going to use.

Lighting	Lighting can give space warmth and character, and can highlight specific features. Activities should be set up as close to natural light as possible or under good lighting (energy-saving globes labelled 'warm white' or 'daylight' work well).
Colour	Colour creates moods and highlights features. Use bright colours to attract the children's attention and encourage an active and stimulating atmosphere; use soft colours and neutral tones to create a quiet, relaxing space.
Displays	Displays of pictures, posters, props and children's artwork can make children feel like they belong, and provide them with visually stimulating information. Make sure displays are uncluttered, colourful and interesting. They should encourage curiosity – children may use what they see in posters in their pretend play or in creating a piece of artwork, so displays should relate to children's interests or an area of learning. Displays should also reflect multiculturalism and diversity, without stereotyping.
Sounds	Sounds can encourage or inhibit learning. A noisy environment can affect children's concentration. Unnecessary background noise (such as music played for no particular purpose) should be avoided as it raises the overall noise level. Encourage children to use voices and make sounds suitable for the environment. Use music and recorded sounds such as bird song in a purposeful way, and use silence as well. It is interesting for children to hear their inner thoughts uninterrupted or sounds they have never heard before.

Providing choice

Providing choice means offering a variety of experiences or spaces in the room that allow each child to comfortably participate in and switch between them. This is an important consideration, as without a variety of experiences children will be waiting or involved in activities that don't interest them, which may lead to difficult behaviour.

Apart from variety and capacity, it's also important that activities cater for children's individual interests and strengths.

By considering the interests and strengths of the children in the group, as well as the culture and lifestyle of their families, you will discover a wide range of possibilities.

Older children are able to provide their own ideas for activities and experiences. They may answer questions you ask, participate in brainstorming with a group or take responsibility for collecting ideas from other children.

Example

Providing choices that cater to children's interests

The following activities are set up after lunch:

- pasting
- drawing with crayons
- block play
- book corner
- water play.

Helena is interested in active play; there are no choices for her.

Ewan is interested in creative activities; he has four choices.

Scott is interested in dramatic play; he has one choice.

Practice task 9

1. Describe how a learning environment can be set up attractively.

2. Describe how a physical learning environment can be set up with aesthetics, choice and the children's interests in mind.

4B Building confident learners

One of the key objectives of all learning experiences is to nurture the child as a confident and involved learner. Children need to be provided with adequate opportunities to learn, and they need to participate in a variety of play experiences and situations.

You need to provide children with the opportunity to practise skills, participate, and develop their social and emotional wellbeing. Children's confidence levels will grow if you show them respect, support their sense of belonging and encourage independence.

Co-constructing meaning

Co-constructing meaning occurs when educators and children work together to form meaning. The educator and child learn together, knowing that they are both acknowledged and valued in the partnership. As part of this process you must be willing to share your own thoughts, while also recognising the child's expertise. Co-constructing meaning occurs most effectively when the educator and child have sustained interactions.

The success of co-construction is embedded in the belief that children are capable. Reflection on the EYLF/MTOP Principle: High expectations and equity supports this belief and encourages co-construction. An approach that recognises children's ability to co-construct respects that:

- learning is practical and happens best in real situations
- negotiation and mediation may be required in order to support learning
- children will be building on prior knowledge
- educators provide different perspectives and realities so that children can think outside of their understanding.

Most techniques used for supporting children's learning rely on the educator supporting the child until they have mastered a skill. Co-construction, however, is about developing the child's ability to master learning strategies for themselves, and learning to build knowledge independently.

You might use the following strategies to support co-construction:

- Use experiences based on the child's interests and focus on building their knowledge.
- Build your own knowledge of children's interests so that you can extend their knowledge.
- Plan and assess your program/curriculum collaboratively with children.

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Ensuring sustained interactions

Sustained interactions are those where children interact with you to share ideas and elaborate on interests.

Interactions can be sustained when you:
▶ gather information
▶ invite participation
▶ support participation
▶ extend learning and/or play
▶ give feedback and support.

To facilitate these sustained interactions you need to listen to and seek clarification of the child's ideas and thoughts. Positive questioning and feedback can be used to achieve this; for example:

- 'I don't know – what do you think?'
- 'That's an interesting idea!'
- 'I like what you have done there.'
- 'Have you seen what Alex has done?'
- 'I wondered why you had that.'
- 'I've never thought about that before.'
- 'What would happen if we did this?'

To maintain dialogue with the child, you may respond to their replies by expressing your ideas through statements such as:

- 'I think ...'
- 'I agree, but also ...'
- 'I imagine ...'
- 'I disagree because ...'
- 'I like ...'
- 'I don't like ...'
- 'I wonder if ...'

Children are more likely to become engaged in discussions that are based on their interests and strengths. They are also more likely to maintain a sense of agency when they have participated in developing the plan of activities and when they are inspired to be curious. Curiosity is about finding things out and experimenting. When initiating a new activity or experience, children's curiosity is excellent and may encourage participation.

Enabling learning dispositions

Learning dispositions are the characteristics that help you to learn. Your interactions and plans provide for and promote learning dispositions in children.

A learning disposition can be described as an attitude or tendency that influences the way a child participates and uses learning strategies. They are linked to feelings and views, and can influence self-image and self-esteem.

If a child exhibits enabling learning dispositions they will be more receptive to the learning experiences that are implemented.

EYLF/MTOP Outcome 4 identifies positive dispositions for learning as:

- curiosity
- cooperation
- confidence
- creativity
- commitment
- enthusiasm
- persistence
- imagination
- reflexivity.

To promote these enabling learning dispositions in your program, you need to provide holistic and child-focused play opportunities that include adult interactions. You can:

- show children how to express themselves verbally and nonverbally
- interact and role-model enthusiasm in your interactions
- be persistent
- encourage and model cooperation at all levels between children and educators
- help children to grow in independence
- encourage confidence in the learning environment.

Practice task 10

1. Participate in a sustained interaction with a child or small group of children.

   Document your interaction, focusing on the actions you took to ensure the interaction was sustained.

2. Document an action you took during your sustained interaction or at another time to co-construct meaning in the learning environment.

3. Choose a learning disposition from EYLF/MTOP Outcome 4 and explain how you would model and promote it in the learning environment, including any materials you would use.

4C Monitoring and reflecting on children's learning

Reflection helps you identify your strengths and weaknesses and where you might improve or extend your knowledge, skills and experience. This concept is supported in the EYLF/MTOP Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice involves continuously assessing your own practice and using the insights you gain to modify the learning program. While delivering a holistic, child-focused program, take time to reflect on your pedagogical practices by identifying what is being achieved in the learning environment and how you can achieve more. Reflect on areas and experiences children have been working on, and on your own style of interaction, discussion methods and knowledge of the service.

There is a range of methods that can be used for reflection in order to improve your practice.

Journals and reflection logs

Journals and logs record your thoughts and feelings, and allow you to look back and evaluate your ideas and actions with the benefit of hindsight. They also demonstrate your progress. You can use critical reflection questions or write about your thoughts on the techniques you use, the context of your work, and the concepts or ideas you have.

A journal can include research, personal comments, notes from professional development workshops and conferences, quotes, photos and sketches.

Structured discussion

A performance review is a structured discussion that occurs as part of the quality process in your organisation. Structured discussions may also occur in meetings and during professional development activities. They focus on specific areas and provide opportunities for you to access formal professional development and further on-the-job training through coaching or mentoring.

Unstructured discussion

Unstructured discussions occur every day at work, whether you are talking to other educators, parents or community members. Each discussion provides the opportunity to reflect on what is being said and think about how the information affects your work.

Supervision

Your supervisor should encourage you to reflect on your practice. Strategies may include:

- educational supervision; for example, stretching your skills so you reach your potential
- administrative supervision; for example, promoting best practice and quality work
- supportive supervision; for example, encouraging you to develop strong, professional relationships.

Checklists

A checklist is a useful tool for reflection. A checklist for self-reflection could be part of your service's practice or something you develop yourself. The checklist might include various points that help you review your skills and abilities, or be a list of actions to aid your self-reflection.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning strategy. Although it is often used for a system-wide review, it can also be used on a personal level to encourage you to look at your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The analysis helps you see where you are now, where you want to be, and then make a plan to get there.

Questioning

Before and after questions are useful for self-evaluation. Think about what you feel and think before you start a project, implement an idea or make a decision for change. Be clear about your plans and intentions.

After the implementation, reflect on:

- how you feel and think now
- what you understand now after this experience
- how this affects your future practice
- what you need to be able to move forward; for instance, research, skills, support or cooperation
- what you want to achieve next.

Program evaluation

When reflecting on the evidence you have collected for the program, start by asking yourself the following:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- How do you feel about it?
- What have you learnt from this?
- What is the significance of this?
- What will you do next?
- How will this affect your future actions and values?

Example

Checklist

Skill	Achieved	Needs improvement
I treat all families with respect	☐	☐
I have a knowledge of each family that I care for and educate	☐	☐
I represent a range of cultures in the environment I am responsible for	☐	☐

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
I have completed my reflection journal		✓		✓	✓
I have achieved a goal		✓ Attended training on behaviour plans			

Linking to outcomes

When you monitor and reflect on children's learning, you need to do this in a way that shows a clear link to your program and the EYLF/MTOP outcomes. You need to be able to evaluate what you have planned and implemented for individuals and groups of children. You will want to know whether the objective has been met or if more time or support is needed.

Your monitoring of and reflection on children's learning will enable you to identify the experiences you need to adapt or redesign in order to continue to address the children's development and interests.

Ensure continuous refinement

You will implement experiences daily that need to be monitored and reflected on to ensure they continue to meet children's interests, engage them and stimulate their learning. You also need to nurture each child to feel a sense of value and belonging. To ensure these things occur, you will be required to continuously refine the curriculum by:

- addressing children's new and evolving skills, strengths, abilities, needs and ideas
- adding and taking away resources, materials and props
- interacting in ways that support the children at the time
- providing routines and timetables that are predictable, flexible and evolving in response to the needs of growing and developing children.

EYLF/MTOP Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice, provides guidance for refinement of your skills and abilities. The principle encourages you to continually seek ways to extend your knowledge and skill, be co-learners with children, families and the community, and to engage with questions about philosophy, ethics and pedagogy.

You are responsible for the care of children and their education. Your service community is looking to you for support, understanding and professional knowledge. You have a professional commitment to lifelong learning, whether that is to increase the level of implementation of a practice or to undergo further training to gain required qualifications in areas such as first aid, food handling, anaphylaxis or educational theory.

Practice task 11

1. Reflect on your own abilities and answer the following questions.
   a. What is your level of understanding of the EYLF and how it is used in the service to monitor and reflect on children's learning?

   b. What is your ability to reflect on and monitor children's learning?

   c. What is your level of decision-making in relation to modifying experiences based on your understanding of children and their learning?

2. Ask your supervisor or an educational leader to comment on these same areas of your work. Write down any feedback they give you.

Summary

- When preparing the environment for learning, identify and access all materials and resources that you will need to implement the planned experiences in the indoor and outdoor play spaces.
- Materials that are attractive, carefully placed and meet the needs of the children will be engaging.
- The physical environment should provide children with choices based on their individual interests and strengths.
- Through co-constructing meaning with children, you are helping to foster their learning and development.
- Sustained interactions are those where you and the children share ideas and elaborate on interests; to create these sustained interactions you must listen to, clarify and extend on the children's ideas and thoughts.
- As an educator you need to model and promote enabling learning dispositions such as enthusiasm, curiosity, commitment, creativity, persistence, confidence, cooperation, imagination and reflexivity.
- While delivering a holistic, child-focused program, take time to reflect on your pedagogical practices by identifying what is being achieved in the learning environment and how you can achieve more.
- Monitoring and reflection on children's learning should lead you to refining learning experiences in response to the children's development stage and interests.

Learning checkpoint 4
Implementing learning experiences to foster children's learning and development

Use the **five** experiences you planned in Learning checkpoint 3 to answer the following questions.

1. Implement the **five** experiences.

   During the implementation, monitor and reflect on the children's learning. Respond to this by continuously refining the experiences to ensure they meet the children's learning needs.

   Record these refinements by noting the:

   - name of the experience
   - date of initial implementation
   - modifications made and the date and time they were made
   - reasons for the modifications
   - date the experience was concluded.

   Write up your notes afterwards using a planning format (a curriculum or program plan).

2. Describe how you co-constructed meaning with a child during at least one of the experiences.

3. Provide **three** examples of how you became involved in sustained interactions with a child during an experience.

4. Choose a learning disposition from EYLF/MTOP Outcome 4 and describe how you modelled and promoted it in a learning experience.

5. Describe how one of your experiences was designed and implemented to reflect your pedagogical practices.

Topic 5

In this topic you will learn about:

5A **Evaluating teaching**

5B **Evaluating the curriculum**

Assessing and evaluating teaching and learning

You will use a variety of methods to gather feedback from families and children about planned and unplanned teaching and learning. Along with this feedback, the data you collect to assess and evaluate the teaching and learning will provide evidence of what has been achieved, including the goals, objectives and outcomes.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
✓	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
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	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
✓	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
✓	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

5A Evaluating teaching

By involving relevant people in your daily work tasks and activities, you can make your curriculum richer and more dynamic as discussions generate fresh ideas for activities and experiences. You will also feel supported as others offer their ideas, participate in preparation and implementation, and contribute to evaluations.

When you collaborate with others in this way you are including their perspective, knowledge and skills to support your direction.

Gathering feedback from children

Once implementation commences, evaluation also commences. Planned and unplanned experiences will be assessed and evaluated, then adapted according to the children's responses and the conditions of the day. Evaluation is not only about reviewing the result; it also includes ongoing review of experiences. This review should include gathering feedback from children.

Children feel belonging as well as ownership when they are involved in decisions relating to activities and experiences. You can discuss ways to change activities to suit a child's needs or interests or use their opinions to encourage others to participate.

If children are to continue to share their feedback, you must take heed of what they tell you. The feedback might indicate that they are keen to continue or extend an activity, that they need support, or that they are under- or over-challenged. When you receive this type of information, you can document it in the formats that are regularly used for collecting information about children, such as learning stories, anecdotal records and jottings.

Older children will be able to provide their own ideas for planned and unplanned activities and experiences. They may answer questions you ask, participate in brainstorming with a group or take responsibility for collecting ideas from other children using graffiti sheets or questionnaires. Every program must respond to spontaneous interests that arise. This means more than just a quick word of acknowledgment. It means taking the interest to the depth of challenge and consideration that the child indicates they would like.

Gathering feedback from families

NQS Standards 6.1 and 6.2 respond to the need for services to work alongside families. Furthermore, Element 1.3.3 is focused on making documentation about each child's program and progress available to families. The guidance to this Element includes expectations that you will:

- exchange information about the program with families
- show them meaningful documentation
- develop methods for making information available
- communicate regularly
- make arrangements to exchange information at mutually convenient times
- use methods of recording that are understood by parents, and are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.

Some strategies for gathering feedback from parents about teaching and learning include:

- talking to parents at arrival and departure times, special events and parent–educator meetings
- adding a parent reflection space on learning stories or other observation records, evaluations or assessments
- providing pages in reflection sheet format that parents can access and fill out to add to a child portfolio or for your information
- developing individual diaries that move with the child from service to home
- creating shared group communication books where you add information about the children's learning or other events throughout the day, which parents are invited to comment on when they pick up their child
- developing graffiti sheets that ask parents important questions
- using standard forms like enrolment forms and/or special purpose forms such as routine reviews, child learning assessments and surveys.

Watch this video about recording and sharing information about children.

Collecting data

During the implementation of planned and unplanned experiences you will be collecting data about children's learning as part of your evaluation. You will collect this data as a form of evidence of children's participation and development. Assessments of and for learning show you what direction to take next in planning to meet children's needs. Although these records focus on the child, they provide information on the success or otherwise of each experience. The data collected can be used to help evaluate the planned and unplanned teaching and learning.

There is a range of approaches you can use to record data about whether or not experiences provided are appropriate opportunities for children. The data collection methods may be set by your service or developed and chosen by you.

In addition to these methods, you will have service-specific methods and time lines for collecting and sharing information, and conducting assessments and evaluations.

You will need to record:

- spontaneous interests that arise
- learning
- new ideas and activities of high interest that arise
- extensions, changes or modifications made
- changes or additions in relation to the way the learning framework outcomes, principles or practices are linked to the experience
- changes to objectives
- what worked and what didn't work
- the opinions of other people, such as parents, other educators and others caring for the child
- the ideas of children who participate in the experience.

Experiences may be evaluated:

- at the time they are concluded
- each time a modification is made
- each day or week.

Using approved frameworks

The EYLF and MTOP have been developed to cover the many developmental aspects of the child as a whole. They enable you to connect what you notice about children's learning to outcomes that clearly link to teaching. The outcomes of the learning frameworks provide meaningful goals that children progress toward. By identifying this progression through children's achievements, you are assessing and evaluating the learning the child is demonstrating, as well as the skills they may benefit from continuing to develop. This direction is facilitated by your teaching and the learning framework enables you to link this learning with teaching.

Each child will learn differently and demonstrate capabilities within the EYLF/MTOP outcomes in different ways. By using your professional judgment, based on the principles and practices of the learning framework, you will ensure that all children are able to be involved in a range of valuable experiences that engage them in learning, allow them to belong and build their capacity to be their best.

Example

Using the EYLF outcomes to evaluate teaching and learning

Mercedes, three years, is playing in the water trough with three other children. They each have their hands and bare arms in the trough and are swishing them around happily. Tessie, an educator, is chatting to the children, helping them to sing a song about fish swimming in the water. At the end of the song, Mercedes says, 'Tessie, you have white skin a bit like me'.

In the water trough the four skin tones are obvious, and Mercedes has noticed that the other children at the trough have darker skin than her. Tessie replies, 'Yes, I do. We all have skin that is a little bit different, don't we?' Mercedes and the other children examine their skin colour with interest. The children place their arms in order from lightest to darkest skin tone. Tessie decides that it is a good time to talk about why people's skin is different. She finishes by saying, 'Isn't it beautiful that we all have different coloured skin?' and Mercedes says, 'Yes, let's take a photo of our arms to put on the wall!'

Later that day, Tessie uses the EYLF to assess the teaching and learning that had occurred at the water trough (planned experience) and in the discussion (unplanned learning). Tessie decides that the following items relate to the unplanned teaching and learning that occurred about skin colour:

- Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Sub-outcome: Children respond to diversity with respect

Tessie can see that the children are working toward understanding how others are similar and different. In the evidence guidance of Outcome 2, she finds the following points that show her she was on the right track. The children 'become aware of connections, similarities and differences between people' and 'notice and react in positive ways to similarities and differences among people'.

Further to this, Tessie views the educator guidance and pinpoints some actions she can take to support further teaching and learning.

This information is all recorded in the format developed by the service. It includes a learning story that will be displayed for parents to read at departure time, and adding to the wall display of planned activities.

Practice task 12

1. Collect a copy of each of the methods used in a service to record feedback about teaching and learning from children and families.
   a. List the methods.

   b. How is the feedback obtained?

   c. Who is responsible for recording the feedback?

   d. When is the document used as a record?

   e. If assessment and evaluation feedback demonstrated that the EYLF/MTOP outcome assigned to an experience had changed, how would this be recorded?

5B Evaluating the curriculum

Evaluation is how you identify whether your program is relevant and meets the needs of children, families and the service. Assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences needs to be undertaken regularly and according to your service guidelines.

Evaluation questions

Once an experience has been implemented and you have gathered evidence and information on how it went, your overall evaluation of the curriculum, the experience, setting and environment can take place.

When evaluating the overall effectiveness of the curriculum and learning experiences, ask yourself the following questions.

What worked? **What didn't work?**	Identify which activities are successful with different children and groups. Note whether there are any factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the experience, such as: ▶ children's needs ▶ the sequence of activities ▶ the resources or materials (including staff) ▶ the time allocated ▶ the available space ▶ aesthetics: the presentation of the materials and space.
Who did and did not participate?	By noting who did and didn't participate in experiences, you are gaining important information about the interests, strengths and needs of children. By recording this information you can monitor each child's or group's level of interest. Ensure that the children that you have planned experiences for are actually participating in them and are meeting the set objectives.
Was the experience age-appropriate? **What can you extend on?**	Evaluate whether the objectives you set were achieved, whether the children enjoyed the experience and whether the level of participation was as you predicted. Think about ways to extend the experience if children enjoyed it.

What feedback have I received?	Consultation with parents and children is an essential part of evaluation. This may occur through informal daily discussion, meetings or in-depth discussions. Other staff, others caring for children, and resource and referral bodies may also need to be consulted. All staff working with the curriculum need to be consulted in order to obtain feedback on its implementation and future design.
How does this affect my future planning?	Through evaluation you are able to gather ideas for experiences that you could use to meet a new set of objectives. It will also help you identify things that are appropriate or inappropriate for the group or individuals. Always continue with the learning experiences children are engaged in, rather than limiting activities to planned experiences only.
What EYLF outcomes have been addressed?	The EYLF outcomes should inform your evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences. An effective, inclusive and balanced curriculum will take into consideration all aspects of a child's development through the EYLF outcomes.

Influencing future curriculum

Curriculum planning is about deciding what follow-up experience you will plan for a group or an individual child. Once an experience has been implemented and you have gathered evidence and information on how the experience went, your overall evaluation of the experience, setting and environment can take place.

When evaluating the appropriateness of the activity, look at how the children could be extended beyond the experience. Never wait for the children to lose interest before increasing the challenge. Look at the ease of their participation and consider whether they are experiencing success and whether extension is required.

Be aware of emerging skills that children need to practise, and of any additional support required.

Any ideas you have for modification, including suggestions from the children, should be acted on. Take the opportunity to extend children's development and further enrich the experience to increase the interest levels of the children involved.

Regular evaluation

When modifying planned and unplanned experiences, you should:

- identify the appropriateness of the activity
- maintain children's agency
- modify to enable access and participation
- extend learning and play
- respond to emerging skills
- support areas of high interest.

These points demonstrate how regular evaluation occurs. As you interact with each experience, you will be evaluating informally. This may require your use of simple recording styles that can be displayed on your evolving plan. You might use diaries, journals, photographs and other simple, yet informative methods.

You will also be completing holistic evaluation of the curriculum at regular intervals. Depending on your service planning arrangements, you may complete more formal evaluation weekly or fortnightly; however, for some services, a daily evaluation might be expected. Regardless of your schedule, consistent use of evaluation enables you to provide suitable, engaging play and learning experiences.

Practice task 13

1. Write an evaluation of the program of experiences provided within a service.

2. What did your evaluation tell you about the experiences?

3. What did your evaluation tell you about the EYLF/MTOP outcomes being worked toward? Is the plan of experiences holistic?

4. What did your evaluation tell you about planning?

5. How often would you recommend evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences should occur? Explain your answer.

6. What is a future experience might you plan based on the information you have gathered?

Summary

- By involving relevant people in your daily work tasks and activities, you can make your curriculum richer and more dynamic as discussions generate fresh ideas for activities and experiences.
- Once implementation commences, evaluation also commences. Planned and unplanned experiences will be assessed and evaluated, then adapted according to children's responses, conditions of the day and spontaneously arising opportunities.
- Feedback on planned and unplanned teaching and learning needs to be gathered from families and children.
- Families' feedback can be obtained through a range of methods, including diary entries and communication books, learning stories, photographs and samples of work.
- Evaluation forms part of the planning cycle and links with the collection of information. Evaluation is how you find out whether your program is relevant and meets the needs of children, families, the service, and the education and care industry.
- Curriculum planning is about deciding what follow-up experience you would plan for a group or an individual child.

Learning checkpoint 5
Assessing and evaluating teaching and learning

1. According to a service's standards, policies, procedures and guidelines, what time line requirements are expected in relation to assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences? Make a list of when each stage should be completed.

2. Evaluate each of the five experiences you implemented in Learning checkpoint 4.

   Write a summary of the following information about each experience:

   - the number of days or sessions the experience was provided for
   - spontaneous interests that arose during the experience
   - learning that was observed
   - new ideas and activities of high interest that arose and were acted on
   - extensions, changes or modifications that were made
   - changes or additions in relation to the way the EYLF outcomes, principles or practices were linked to the experience over the time of its implementation
   - changes to the objectives over the time of its implementation
   - what worked and what didn't work.

3. Gather feedback from a family and their child about experiences you have planned and implemented. Find out whether the child:
   - enjoyed the experiences
   - found the experiences appropriate
   - talked about the experiences at the service or at home
   - was engaged in the experiences.

   Collect the feedback and then record the information using one of the assessment methods you've used in a previous learning checkpoint.

4. Draw on all the feedback you have collected and your evaluation to develop **two** new experiences to add to the curriculum.

   Answer the following questions for each of the new experiences.

   a. Explain why your evaluation led you from the initial experience to this new experience.

b. Clearly link the experiences to a relevant EYLF outcome by using the sub-outcome as a reference.