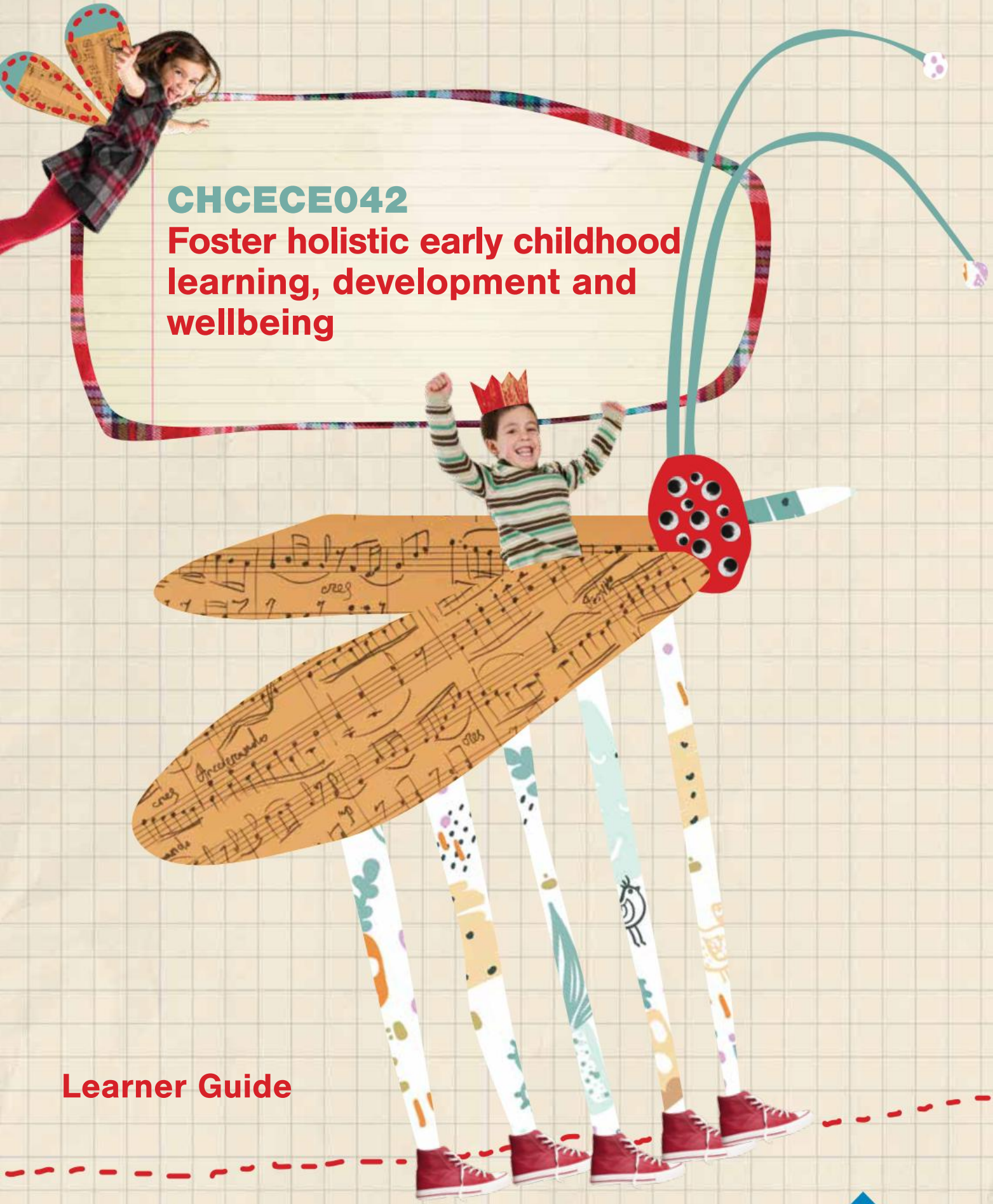

CHCECE042

Foster holistic early childhood learning, development and wellbeing

Learner Guide

Updated to include National Quality Framework changes

One World for Children Pty Ltd

Aspire Learning Resources

CHCECE042

Foster holistic early childhood learning, development and wellbeing

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 2.1

One World for Children Pty Ltd

Aspire Learning Resources

CHCECE042 Foster holistic early childhood learning, development and wellbeing, Release 1

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First published July 2021
Second edition published October 2023

Cover design Studio Regina
Printer Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street, Port Melbourne VIC 3207

e-ISBN 978-1-76075-432-7 (PDF version)
ISBN 978-1-76075-431-0

Aspire Learning Resources
Supporting Vocational Education and Training for 30 years
1991 to 2023

Contents

Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE042 Foster holistic early childhood learning, development and wellbeing*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. Information regarding how this Learner Guide relates to this unit of competency is detailed in our mapping guide.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide is content only, however additional resources may be purchased that will assist you in your learning. Additional resources include case studies, Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which assessment activities 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 action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
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 activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

This table maps each topic in this Learner Guide to the National Quality Standard and national learning framework: Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

T = Topic

Topics	National Quality Standard (NQS)
T1–T4	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
T1–T4	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
T1–T4	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
T1–T4	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
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	Principles
T1–T4	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
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T1–T4	Equity, inclusion and high expectations
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T1–T4	Collaborative leadership and teamwork
	Practice
T1–T4	Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches
T1–T4	Responsiveness to children
T1–T4	Play-based learning and intentionality
T1–T4	Learning environments
T1–T4	Cultural responsiveness
T1–T4	Continuity of learning and transitions
T1–T4	Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing
	Learning Outcomes
T1–T4	1. Children have a strong sense of identity
T1–T4	2. Children are connected to and contribute to their world
T1–T4	3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
T1–T4	4. Children are confident and involved learners
T1–T4	5. Children are effective communicators

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- **1A** Development and guidelines
- **1B** Core principles
- **1C** Researching and analysing
- **1D** Curriculum theories

Foundations of curriculum

When you monitor children's development against milestones or learning outcomes, you identify their abilities and what they can already do and understand.

You also note the skills they are developing. This information helps you provide an ongoing and responsive curriculum.

Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF) is the basis for your service's standards, policies and procedures, and encourages you to focus on children's strengths and interests. The EYLF and the National Quality Standard (NQS) are both components of the National Quality Framework (NQF). Together, they refer to the importance of monitoring children's development to assess their learning and identify whether additional support is required.

The EYLF is accessible in your service or online at: aspirelr.link/eylf.

1A Development and guidelines

Children have the right to feel safe, to learn and play, and to have their basic needs provided for.

You are responsible for making sure children feel safe and supported.

Responsibilities have been set out for governments, communities, services, families and educators in the form of the NQF, which includes the following components:

- Laws – Education and Care Services National Law
- Regulations – Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Standards – NQS
- Approved learning framework – EYLF

The NQF components should be represented through service policies and procedures. Educators must use these guidelines – and other theories related to child development – to help them create practices that achieve high-quality development and wellbeing outcomes for children.

For more information, access the *Guide to the National Quality Framework* at: aspirelr.link/nqf-guide-pdf. This details the quality areas, standards and associated elements, and provides references, links and an assessment guide.

The National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF is a system used across Australia to help education and care services work towards best practice and best quality.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) oversees the implementation of the NQF. ACECQA also educates and informs the community, the education and care industry and government about current research and best practice across Australia.

The NQF incorporates licensing, regulations and quality assurance into a single system operating Australia-wide.

This framework applies to:

- long day care
- family day care
- preschool/kindergarten
- outside school hours care.

Laws and regulations

Laws and regulations are requirements that education and care services must follow.

The following are some laws and regulations you should be aware of.

Area of curriculum	Requirement	Details
Educational program and practice	Section 168 – Offence relating to required programs Regulation 73 – Educational program	All educational programs must contribute to learning outcomes.
Health and safety	Section 165 – Offence to inadequately supervise children	Children must be supervised at all times.
Physical environment	Regulation 113 – Outdoor space—natural environment	Services must allow children to explore and experience the natural environment.
Relationships with children	Regulation 155 – Interactions with children	Educators must: › encourage children to express themselves and their opinions › undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem › maintain the dignity and rights of each child › give each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour › have regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.

The National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS is the measurement system for education and care services.

It is part of the NQF and its role is to provide services with a clear set of guidelines showing how they are to meet an expected level of quality.

The NQS includes seven quality areas relating to different aspects of education and care:

- 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

The NQS is broken down in the following way:

- Quality areas are very broad areas that identify what services must think about.
- Standards break the quality areas down into particular areas that are important.
- Elements tell you exactly what needs to be done in each standard to meet the quality level required.

The following areas are most closely related to the holistic development of children.

Quality area	How this relates to what you do	Relevant policies
Quality area 1 – Educational program and practice	Guides you to understand development and learning, and use this information effectively.	- Programming or curriculum policy
Quality area 2 – Health and safety	Supports you to make sure children's basic needs are met, including their diet, sleep, rest, relaxation, illness, injuries and need for protection against abuse or neglect.	- Supervision policy
Quality area 3 – Physical environment	Provides information on how to set up and maintain an environment, resources and materials that are suited to children's developmental needs and are adapted to the individual development of each child.	- Inclusive environment policy - Environment policy - Play-based learning policy
Quality area 5 – Relationships with children	Sets out information about how to interact with and show respect for children, to work with them and to help them develop strong communication skills.	- Behaviour guidance policy

For more information on the NQS, go to aspirelr.link/national-quality-standard.

Service policies and procedures

Service policies and procedures will reflect the whole NQF. They are in place to make sure that the education and care laws, regulations and standards are followed.

Services will have a range of policies that explain how they expect things to be done. There are particular policies that services must have. These are listed in Regulation 168 and include:

- nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements
- sun protection
- water safety, including safety during any water-based activities

- the administration of first aid
- sleep and rest for children
- incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures, complying with Regulation 85
- dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with Regulation 88
- dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in Regulation 90
- emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in Regulation 97
- delivery of children to and collection of children from education and care service premises, including procedures complying with Regulation 99
- excursions, including procedures complying with Regulations 100–102
- providing a child-safe environment
- staffing
- interactions with children, including the matters set out in Regulations 155 and 156
- enrolment and orientation
- governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records
- the acceptance and refusal of authorisations
- payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service
- dealing with complaints.

Approved learning frameworks

The approved learning framework for early childhood from birth to six years is the EYLF.

The EYLF is made up of the following sections:

- Principles: things educators believe
- Practices: things educators do
- Outcomes: things that link to children's learning and development
- Sub-outcomes: breakdowns or dot points under each outcome

Approved learning frameworks are designed to:

- inspire and improve conversations between educators about young children and their learning
- provide a common language about learning that educators, children, families, the community and professionals can all use.

While the whole of the EYLF supports your understanding of child development and how children learn, two principles help you focus on how you can learn more, as outlined in the following table.

Principle: Partnerships

Families will contribute to the learning community if they are encouraged to share their values and beliefs with you in a range of ways. They will choose to get involved if they feel confident that their wishes for their child are being respected and considered throughout the day.

Ways educators might communicate with families:

- Schedule family–educator–child meetings to establish goals and share service changes.
- Listen to family members tell you about their children's strengths and how they learn.
- Have access to telephones, email or service apps to communicate with families during the child's day.
- Make sure family members know the telephone numbers or email addresses of the service, and the times you are available to answer phone calls or emails.
- Give family members positive messages about their children.
- Make an effort to communicate with any family member who does not normally attend the service; for example, if the father always drops off and picks up the child, consider how you can make contact with the mother.
- Provide family members with structured ways to comment on the service's communications; for example, email, phone calls or take-home surveys.
- Speak to family members directly (not just leaving messages on voice mail or sending emails).
- Provide copies of service information in a variety of ways; for example, in printed handbooks and online.

The open communication you establish by managing communication effectively will ensure that families choose to share their needs and issues in a positive way as part of their partnership with you. They will also feel confident in sharing milestones and events, and will be more comfortable participating in your program.

Principle: Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning

Your understanding of children will grow over time as you gain experience, learn new things, and come across different environments and attitudes. Personal and professional development is important and continues throughout life. It helps you to remain enthusiastic when the work you do is challenging.

Professional development includes learning at work, as well as the activities you are involved in outside your daily work environment. You could learn and exchange information about child development and wellbeing by sharing information and collaborating with colleagues. You might do this by:

- talking about the day, children's learning and how experiences help development
- asking questions about things you aren't sure about or don't understand, how things work, what your responsibilities are and how you can improve
- attending staff meetings
- becoming involved in discussions that are happening in the service.

You might also find information by:

- attending training sessions
- participating in a performance review
- reading further on topics that you would like to learn about
- gaining a qualification
- making contact with a specialist service or resource worker
- joining a professional organisation.

Australian Early Development Census

Decisions about quality practice occur through research that gathers past and present information about children and their progress.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a body that collects details from teachers of children in their first year of school. This occurs every three years. The instrument collects information about children's skills under five domains:

- physical health and well being
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills that are used at school
- communication skills and general knowledge.

Some ways the AEDC can support educators is through helping in the following ways.

Advocating for children in early childhood	➢ Raising awareness of the importance of education and care ➢ Providing information about the five domains ➢ Sharing information with others about the importance of early childhood education services ➢ Encouraging a positive view of early childhood education
Building partnerships with stakeholders	➢ Families ➢ Colleagues and others working in early childhood ➢ Other education and care services ➢ Schools ➢ Teachers ➢ Local government ➢ Community members
Developing child focussed initiatives	➢ Understanding when children are vulnerable and looking at the factors in the community that contribute to this ➢ Comparing service and family quality of care to determine protective and risk factors, particularly how economic, political and cultural environments effect development. ➢ Supporting children's transition to school by encouraging schools and early childhood services to work together.
Advising ACECQA	➢ Providing data that shows how practice influences development ➢ Supporting development of NQS and EYLF
Providing research results relating to development	➢ Educators can access services and resources ➢ Data relating to level of risk and vulnerability based on development

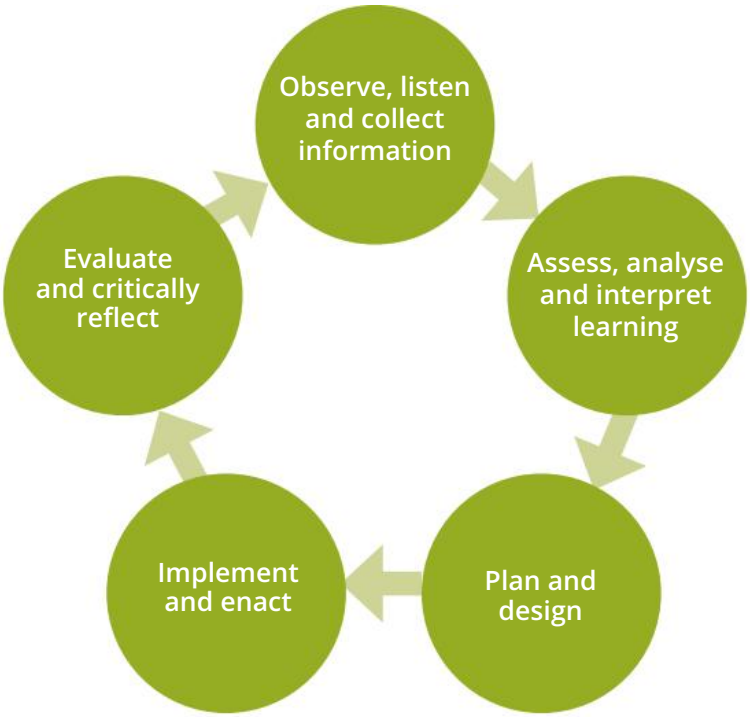
You can access the AECDC at aspirelr.link/aedc

The planning cycle

Educators use a planning cycle so they know the next steps to take when they notice development and learning.

The planning cycle is based on your knowledge of child development. When you are aware of child development you are able to identify when a child is learning and this helps you to know what learning might come next.

The following diagram demonstrates how the planning cycle occurs.



Example

Curriculum requirements

Maud was planning an experience outdoors in the garden. She took the following things into consideration:

- Rules and expectations of the service – links with the laws, regulations, NQS, policies and procedures.
- The experience must link with a learning outcome – links with the laws and regulations.
- The children must be supervised at all times – links with the laws and regulations.
- The materials and equipment must be safe and suit the age, stage and ability of the children – links with the NQS, policies and procedures.
- The experience would allow the children to experience and interact with the natural environment – links with the regulations and standards.
- Her interactions with children will be positive and help them understand their task – links with the regulations, NQS, policies and procedures.

Practice Task 1

1. Draw a line to match each requirement on the left with its description.

* Behaviour guidance policy	* Guides educators to support holistic learning and development by collaborating with and seeking information from each other.
* EYLF Principle: Critical reflection and ongoing professional	* Guides you to understand development and learning and to do something with the information you understand.
* Health and safety laws and regulations	* Makes it clear that children must be supervised at all times.
* NQS educational program and practice	* Guides educator relationships with children.

2. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a body that collects details from teachers of about their first year of school. This occurs every three years. The instrument collects information about how teachers develop curriculum.

   * True * False

3. The planning cycle is based on your knowledge of child development. When you are aware of child development you are able to identify when a child is learning and this helps you to know what learning might come next.

   * True * False

1B Core principles

The core principles of child development are aspects that have been identified as important to all children for them to develop and learn successfully.

Although these principles might be documented in different ways, they are interrelated. The core principles presented here refer to the ways physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication development occurs. The core principles include:

- holistic development
- sequence of development
- rate of development
- brain development
- heredity, environment and active learning
- critical periods and scaffolding
- belonging, being and becoming
- individualised learning
- play as learning.

Consider how the core principles influence child development.

Holistic development

Each skill requires advances in several areas that combine to achieve an outcome.

All areas of development are important. They are linked, and skills cannot be achieved without their coordination.

Holistic development includes:

- physical development
- cognitive development
- social development
- emotional development
- communication development.

It also includes how the child interacts with the natural world.

The following are examples of how learning a key skill or ability requires development in several areas.

Type of activity	How developmental areas are linked
Learning to cut with scissors	➤ Physical development: Opening and closing scissors, holding materials in place while they are being cut ➤ Social development: The child learns from watching their peers and others use scissors ➤ Emotional development: The child's self-esteem increases and they develop confidence in trying new tasks ➤ Cognitive development: Understanding the concept of opening and shutting the scissors, deciding what to cut and how, working out and understanding how to complete the task ➤ Communication development: Understanding and talking about the materials, actions, process and product
Learning through pretend play	➤ Physical development: Acting out roles and completing tasks ➤ Emotional development: Expressing feelings in the roles taken ➤ Social development: Communicating with other players and expressing their ideas ➤ Cognitive development: Understanding the role, memorising actions, imitating and imagining ➤ Communication development: Sharing their ideas, expressing their feelings and roles, using language and/or text in play or to express ideas
Gaining comfort through a hug	➤ Physical development: Holding a person, balancing on their lap ➤ Social development: Feeling comfortable in the space of another person, asking for what they need or want, trusting the person to comfort them ➤ Emotional development: Having feelings, understanding how these feelings might be soothed by the hug and/or the person providing a hug ➤ Cognitive development: Understanding and attributing the names of emotions to how they feel ➤ Communication development: Asking for or indicating what they want or need, using non-verbal skills to show the hug is appreciated or needed.
Playing a hiding game	➤ Physical development: Being able to move items to find the hidden object ➤ Social development: Understanding the actions of the person hiding the object and interacting with them ➤ Emotional development: Regulating their feelings and understanding that their attempts are not failures ➤ Cognitive development: Understanding what hiding is and that if you cannot see something, it might still exist ➤ Communication development: Knowing the language used and communicating verbally and non-verbally about the actions

Type of activity	How developmental areas are linked
Participating in a conversation	➤ Physical development: Being able to coordinate the mouth and tongue to be able to speak and indicate using the hands, face and body ➤ Social development: Understanding how conversation works and using social actions to get the message across ➤ Emotional development: Feeling confident in communicating with others and that their contribution is valued ➤ Cognitive development: Understanding words and their meanings ➤ Communication development: Knowing how to put sentences together, understanding how to communicate a message and use a language

Sequence and rate of development

Development progresses in a step-by-step pattern that advances from simple to complex.

This represents the concept of maturation; as the body and mind develop, so do skills and abilities.

Children must crawl before they can walk.

The following are some examples of how skills develop in sequence:

- Children crawl before they can walk.
- Children walk before they can run.
- Children jump before they can hop.
- Children play individually prior to playing with others.
- Children pretend with lifelike items before using their imagination to use items in various ways.
- Children develop trust before they feel able to explore.
- Children need their basic needs met, such as having food, water and sleep, prior to feeling safe and secure.
- Children initially believe that when objects cannot be seen, they do not exist, then start to realise that things they cannot see continue to exist.
- Children learn to communicate consonants during babble and cooing, then to start to form words and sentences.

Children develop at different rates depending on a range of factors. These factors include each of the core principles. You can see these represented as milestones of development that are expectations of each age.

When optimal opportunities exist, development will be close to expectations. When one or more of the opportunities are lacking, development may be delayed.

Examples

How the environment influences the rate of development

The following examples show how the environment influences children's development of numeracy skills. The children in this example are 5 years of age.

Example 1

Frances has seen the numbers one to five. She enjoys the song 'Five little ducks', using her fingers as ducks. Frances is likely to achieve the related milestones as expected.

Example 2

Marika is learning to count to five while she plays. The educator sets up five chairs for musical chairs and they count the chairs and children together. Later they complete a five-piece puzzle that has the numbers one to five written on the pieces. At group time they sing 'Five little monkeys' and wiggle their fingers while they count. Marika is likely to achieve the related milestones earlier than expected.

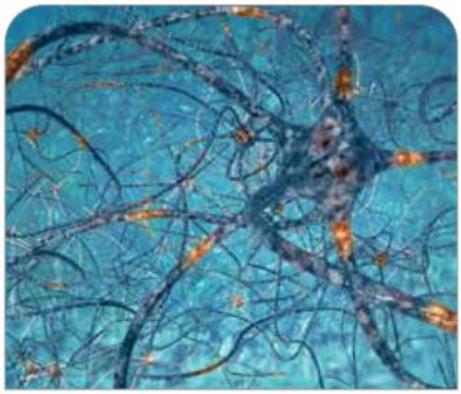
Example 3

Gertrude has never been exposed to numbers or counting. Gertrude is likely to achieve the related milestones later than expected.

Brain development

The synapses that are created as children develop new skills and knowledge allow them to make choices and become more independent.

Infants are born with 100 billion brain cells that are ready to connect. As the infant learns about the world, their brain cells make connections called synapses. When the connections in the brain are developing, a substance called myelin covers the connection, insulating and strengthening it. This process is called myelination. It helps neural impulses travel more quickly and effectively, which results in a greater amount of control and a shorter reaction time.



Learning occurs through synapses between brain cells.

Children do not develop more brain cells as they grow; instead, they form more connections between cells as they continue to learn. These connect during learning and develop strength if this learning is practised.

Brain and spinal cord development link to the acquisition of skills. In some areas this links to the patterns of development that start from the head and work down (called cephalocaudal development) and development that starts from the centre of the body and works outward (called proximodistal development).

This is shown in the way the following skills are learnt:

- Using the toilet relies on the development of the spinal cord providing the senses needed to feel that using the toilet is necessary.
- Eating solid food relies on the development of small muscles to eat.
- Large muscles of the arms and legs develop before smaller muscles in the fingers and toes.

Learning can either take place through play and experience or through rote learning. Rote learning is a technique based on memorising through repetition. Examples of rote learning include repeating numbers or the alphabet over and over, or writing something repeatedly. Contemporary learning theories suggest that more meaningful learning occurs through play and first-hand experience.

Heredity, environment and active learning

Nature, or characteristics at birth, is nurtured by the environments children experience and the active learning they are provided.

'Nature' refers to how genetics and heritage influence development, whereas 'nurture' refers to how the environment and interactions influence development.

This connection is called 'nature versus nurture' and it relates to the way both nature and nurture provide us with capabilities. However, it is unknown how much each contributes to our skills and abilities.

With this in mind, the quality of the environment and interactions you provide can be recognised as vital to a child being able to reach their full potential.

Some aspects that demonstrate how heredity and the environment interact are shown here.

Examples of nature	Examples of nurture
➤ Infants demonstrate reflex actions. ➤ Temperament influences the way a child approaches situations. ➤ A child may have a natural skill or ability based on their genetics, such as being skilled in understanding logical information, or being able to excel in a particular physical area. ➤ A child is born with a learning style and intelligence that comes naturally to them. ➤ A child is born with the ability to make sounds and automatically starts to interact by looking at faces. They quickly begin to use a conversational style; making sounds then waiting for a response.	➤ Children generally learn to ride a two-wheel bike between the ages of three and eight depending on the amount of practice provided. ➤ When a child is responded to with care and attention, they will be better able to participate and contribute. ➤ When attitudes towards play are positive and supported, children will engage freely, learning through play. ➤ When attitudes to play are negative, the child has less desire to play. ➤ A child's intelligence can be increased through consistent interaction with a varied and stimulating environment. ➤ A child learns to communicate through experiencing communication.

Critical periods and scaffolding

While children may develop skills through independent exploration and practice, many skills can be supported through providing support during periods when the learning is optimal.

This teaching is called scaffolding and the period when this is most valuable is called a teachable moment, critical period or a window of opportunity. A critical period can be noticed as the time when a child first shows an interest in a skill or that they are working towards a skill.

Some examples of how critical periods are supported by scaffolding are shown in the following table.

Indication that a critical period has begun	How learning is scaffolded
Child starts to pull themselves up using furniture	➢ Furniture and equipment is provided so the child is able to gain balance without falling. ➢ A clear pathway is made so the child doesn't trip. ➢ The child sees other children moving about and accessing areas that they are unable to access unless they can walk. ➢ Adults provide encouragement and show excitement at progress.
Child shows interest in looking at a book	➢ Books are provided. ➢ The child sees other children looking at books and using them in various ways. ➢ Pictures are pointed to and noises or words are added. ➢ Books with hard covers are added so they are easy to grasp and turn, touch and manipulate. ➢ As skills develop, more difficult books are provided and words are included. ➢ Children are read to by adults. ➢ Word recognition and later reading are encouraged.
Child shows preference for a particular adult through smiling or feeling comforted	➢ The child sees other children being comforted and cared for. They observe the adult responding genuinely and lovingly to other children. ➢ The adult helps to nurture the child and provides for their needs. ➢ The adult responds with interaction and warmth.
A child begins to wash their own hands	➢ The child sees the actions of others and learns the process of washing hands. ➢ The adult helps them with skills they need to wash their hands. ➢ Slowly the adult reduces their support until the child can wash their own hands.

Example

Using scaffolding to help a child learn

Greg, one year old, is pulling at his shoe, trying to remove it. Helen, an educator, notices his actions and puts scaffolding strategies into place:

- She makes sure his shoe is loose so that he can pull it off easily.
- She talks to him about the actions of pulling off his shoe, gives encouragement and acknowledges his efforts.
- She suggests that Greg watches his peers to see how they are taking their shoes off.
- She suggests that his mum provides him with velcro shoes so he can learn the skill

Belonging, being and becoming

Children learn best when they feel safe, valued and secure.

Children learn best when their basic needs are met.

They must have their basic needs met and be recognised as important if they are to feel a sense of belonging. When children feel they belong and are accepted in a setting, they are free to be themselves, to explore and learn. Belonging is strengthened when educators include the whole child. This can be achieved by being aware of individual development and learning, and by having a strong interactive relationship with family members.

'Being' is important to the child's development. It is about providing learning at the child's pace and with their best interests in mind. It means allowing the child to explore and show critical periods in their own time, which are supported through scaffolding. In doing this you are helping the child to become all that they can be.

The state of 'being' is one that educators sometimes struggle to maintain. By building a child's sense of 'belonging' you are supporting and encouraging children to be themselves, be interested in what they like, be involved in learning about themselves and the parts of the world they see as important, and be present in what they are doing and enjoy those moments. This helps to develop the emerging person to feel positive self-esteem, and that their lives are full and rewarding.

Educators often mistake 'becoming' as the point of leading the child in the direction or to the learning they feel is important, rather than to the learning or direction that the child is ready for. For example, a child may be rushed to learn to use the toilet. In essence, 'becoming' is about supporting the child as they learn and extend their knowledge and interests, as new milestones emerge and ideas, strengths and knowledge evolve. Educators support children's 'becoming' by providing scaffolding and rich experiences that support the child to learn and develop at their own rate.

The state of 'being' is one that people struggle to maintain. By building a child's sense of 'belonging' you are supporting and encouraging children to be themselves, to be interested in what they like, be involved in learning about themselves and the parts of the world they see as important, and to be present in what they are doing and enjoy those moments. This helps to develop the emerging person to feel positive self-esteem, and that their lives are full and rewarding.

The following are some examples of how you can support children to feel safe and valued as you encourage their feelings of belonging, being and becoming:

- Make the physical learning environment safe and provide time for children to learn and practise skills.
- Interact with children frequently as individuals. This will support them to feel a sense of belonging. Their involvement in experiences will increase if they are comfortable exploring familiar spaces with supportive people.
- Help children to feel emotionally safe to support their sense of belonging. This will help them to express their emotions. When children have a sense of belonging, they feel safe to be themselves. This means that they are curious and involved, and demonstrate a sense of agency. Their ability to be enables them to learn, develop and practise skills so that they can achieve their full potential – or 'becoming' all they can be.

Individualised learning

The opportunities you provide to children will be influenced by a range of needs and interests.

You will identify these through monitoring, sharing information, recording and assessing.

Some of these factors are described in the following table.

Characteristics of children	- Age of the children - Peer group influences - Interests and abilities - Needs for rest or sleep - Needs for privacy, solitude or quiet time - Cultural and community attitudes and expectations
Physical environment	- Availability of indoor and outdoor facilities - Venue and location - Educators' capabilities - Safety considerations - Size of the group - Desire and ability for children to set up equipment
Purpose of the service	- Type of service - Frequency of using the service
Support	- Amount and type of support and/or participation you have from families and the community - Level of support available to you from outside resources, such as specialists and inclusion support workers
EYLF outcomes	- Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing; Sub-outcome: Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health and personal safety

Children learn and demonstrate what they know in different ways; for example:

- some children learn through group activities; others prefer one-on-one contact and direct instruction
- some children do not notice things they can learn until these are brought to their attention, while other children notice things and interact with them independently to learn
- emotional skills might be learnt through close contact and trusting relationships, but are also demonstrated in friendships and through group activities
- children learn in different ways based on their learning style. They may prefer to listen, watch how things work or to participate.
- some children are keen to investigate; others need encouragement
- some children will talk about and demonstrate their knowledge and skills; others will demonstrate this only if asked

Play as learning

Play is used by children to learn and develop skills.

Different types of play help children to develop in different areas. However, even though a play setting might have a particular area of focus, holistic learning will still take place.

Self-directed play involves children controlling the direction and structure of play. They freely initiate the play from their interest and continue due to their enjoyment or sense of fulfilment.

Most children are involved in self-directed play for the majority of the time. They may need educators to demonstrate how to use materials or provide resources, but are then able to proceed to play independently or with peers. Self-directed play allows the child to use their own creativity to decide how the play will go and in which direction. They identify who is involved and how, developing social relationships and communication.

Bear in mind that children:

- need time to observe and think things through
- benefit from hands-on experiences in real situations
- prefer varied levels of autonomy; some children prefer to be completely dependent on the adults around them, while others want to be independent
- may have experienced different levels of responsibility – some children may never be expected to take any responsibility at home, and others may be responsible for a wide range of things that are appropriate or inappropriate for their age
- play and learn best when their family and peers are around
- like to observe and imitate
- are very active and enjoy physical activity
- dislike being singled out
- are sometimes not used to listening to adults
- often prefer to experiment and use their initiative in play rather than being directed by others

- play cooperatively rather than competitively
- like to persist and practise over and over to succeed at something
- have varied experiences of sharing – some children will be used to sharing from a very young age, while others may have had limited experience of sharing
- use body language before words
- speak their first language before any additional language, and may not speak English – if you work with children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, develop appropriate methods of supporting play and learning in ways that reflect and respect their backgrounds.

Child-initiated learning means that the child has chosen their activity and are learning. This may be an informal learning experience that involves play and results in knowledge, or the child may initiate a learning experience in which adults participate and guide the learning. Each curriculum should have a balance of child-initiated learning and intentional teaching, and should take into account that children learn in different ways – through listening, seeing and doing.

Child-initiated learning is promoted within the EYLF under the following listed practices, each with different methods you can use to support learning:

- Responsiveness to children – catering for children's interests and abilities, and participating as partners in child-initiated learning
- Play-based learning and intentionality – respecting the value of play in learning, and adding sustained shared conversations and encouragement to think and explore, including providing for teachable moments
- Learning environments – catering for different learning styles and offering possibilities and experiences, knowing that the children will explore using the resources and ideas provided
- Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing – watching, noticing, observing and recording so that you find out what is next, what the children need and how the program and your pedagogy will adapt based on the knowledge you gain

Practice Task 2

1. Draw a line to match each core principle of development to its description.

* Sequence and rate of development	* Includes the interrelationship between physical, cognitive, social, emotional and communication development, and how children interact with the natural world.
* Holistic development	* Progresses in a step-by-step pattern that advances from simple to complex.
* Brain development	* Synapses are strengthened as learning takes place.
* Belonging, being and becoming	* Nature, or our characteristics at birth, are nurtured by the environments we experience and the active learning we are provided with.
* Heredity, environment and active learning	* Times when this is most valuable are called teachable moments, critical periods or window of opportunity
* Play as learning	* Children learn best when they feel safe, valued and secure.
* Individualised learning	* Identified through monitoring, sharing information, recording and assessing.
* Scaffolding	* Different types of play help children to develop in different areas.

1C Researching and analysing

Theories are developed based on ideas that have been investigated and backed up by evidence.

Regulations, standards, policies and procedures are based on the results of theory and research. Some theories provide an overview that guides curriculum, while others are specific to areas of development or learning.

Bear in mind that theories can be biased towards the theorist's particular beliefs. This is why it is important for educators to:

- research information
- analyse what the information means
- compare the information
- think about how it applies to their practice
- discuss the information with others.

You may need to research information and discuss your findings with others.

Research purpose

You must regularly research to check your understanding and keep your knowledge up to date.

You may research theories related to particular topics or areas of the curriculum, or you may research knowledge or supporting information. This forms part of your educator development. Educators will often be faced with different opinions and this requires them to find out more and then compare details. This might be about finding evidence to prove their ideas or gaining support for new directions.

Theories can be redeveloped, modified or even discarded as they are tested. Taking one theory and using it endlessly without re-evaluation can lead to stagnant opinions and practices.

Research can help you to:

- explore ideas
- get more information on an issue
- solve a problem
- make an argument (you will need to collect information that proves your point)
- provide direction
- check understanding.

Authoritative and credible sources

When you conduct research, you must use current and clear information that comes from a reliable source.

This means that the information should be authoritative, trusted as true and accurate, and credible, believable and convincing. Authoritative and credible information is made up of information that has been explored in detail, documented at length, put to the test, examined and considered in a variety of ways by a range of experts.

Some authoritative and credible sources of information are found in:

- textbooks
- factsheets from specialists
- government-based websites.

To gain your own perspective on theory, compare theory and to learn about how theory might influence your practice, you must be able to research effectively. The depth of information you need depends on your level of current knowledge and whether you are at your initial stage of investigation or exploring a theory further.

Reputable sources are ones you can trust. They are sources of information that have come from recognised and respected bodies, or individuals with high standing.

ACECQA has reliable and appropriate online information about current trends in the education and care industry. It also has links to particular theory-based information. At aspirelr.link/acecqa, you will find a 'Latest News' page, along with links, libraries, fact sheets, and details for educators, service providers and families.

Reputable sites may be recognised in the following ways.

Site	Site address includes	Example
Government organisations	.gov	education.gov.au
Organisational sites and foundations	.org	simplypsychology.org
Educational sites, including universities and colleges	.edu	utas.edu.au

Some sites specialise in a topic or theory; for example, aspirelr.link/multiple-intelligences-oasis specialises in the theory of multiple intelligences.

Commercial sites (that contain .com) should only be trusted if you are already familiar with the topic or theory and are building on or seeking information based on understanding the concepts of your research. Commercial sites may also be reputable if they are linked to a reputable site; for example, ACECQA provides a link to the Kidsafe website: aspirelr.link/kidsafe.

Information currency

Generally you should only use information that is less than 10 years old.

This may be identified by the dates shown on an article or the webpage, which indicates when the information was published, updated or copyrighted.

Many theories have a history that dates back a number of years; however, theories are regularly reconsidered or applied in new and useful ways. This might occur as new ideas and concepts emerge and past theory is reapplied to meet current expectations and standards.

Often you will research new information and notice a similarity or correlation between this and a theory you are familiar with.

Referencing

When you gather information from another source, it is important that you reference this.

Referencing means indicating where the information came from, whether it is used directly as you found it, or written in your own words.

The benefits of referencing include being able to:

- find the information if you need it again
- let others know where you found the information
- show that you didn't make up the information, and that it is a proven theory.

Common guidelines for referencing are as follows.

Type of publication	Referencing style	Example
Book	Author surname, Author first name, Year of publication, Book title in italics, Edition number, Publisher, Location of publisher	Example: Buchan, Niki. 2018, *Adventurous play: Developing children's life skills through rich play experiences*. Teaching Solutions, Victoria, Australia.
Website article	Author surname, Author first name and initials, Year of publication, Article title in italics, Website name, Website address	Example: Russell, Nicola. 2019, *Practicing essential risky play safely in ECEC settings to boost children's wellbeing*. The Sector. https://thesector.com.au/2019/08/01/practicing-essential-risky-play-safely-in-ecec-settings-to-boost-childrens-wellbeing

Analysing and comparing theories

While researching, you will find information that links to your purpose and details that might lead you to other areas of interest.

This can be exciting as you expand your knowledge and interests.

When analysing and comparing theories, you might identify the range of theories available, then familiarise yourself with each theory. Once you have this information, you can ask questions about how the theories are similar and different.

Some questions you might ask about each theory are:

- What is each theory about?
- When was each theory developed?
- Who developed each theory?
- Was the theory developed based on another theory or theorist?
- What is the aim or focus of the theory?
- How is the theory applied?
- How do you feel about the theory? Does it interest you, make something clearer, give you a sense of meaning, or does it confuse you and make you feel unsure?

There are a few ways to document information so you can compare it:

- Make a list.
- Use a table.
- Use a Venn diagram.

Example

Documenting comparative information

Below is an example of a comparison between two theories. This is an example of how comparisons can be documented.

Make a list	Similarities: - Believes in play-based learning Differences: - Theory 1 – Children need to be provided opportunities to take risks. Educators should step back at all times and let children explore. - Theory 2 – Children need to be kept in safe situations at all times.

Use a table to show similarities and differences

	Similarities	Differences
Theory 1	Believes in play-based learning.	➤ Children need to be provided opportunities to take risks. ➤ Educators should step back at all times and let children explore.
Theory 2		➤ Children need to be kept in safe situations at all times.

Use a table to show pros and cons (what you agree and disagree with)

	Pros (for)	Cons (against)
Theory 1	➤ Believes in play-based learning. ➤ Believes children need to be provided opportunities to take risks.	➤ Does not allow educators to help children play, learn and explore.
Theory 2	➤ Believes in play-based learning. ➤ Aims to keep children safe.	➤ Limits children's ability to play and explore.

Use a Venn diagram

Assessing relevance

Research is most useful if it is relevant to your purpose.

This means that it provides further information, backup or support toward your area of interest. Not only do you need to consider the core ideas you are focused on, but also the context. The context is the setting or details that help you understand the information. When researching consider the context of the theories, such as:

- who they relate to
- what setting they apply to
- if they link to a particular pedagogy or philosophy
- how they apply in various situations.

The following are some things you should consider when assessing the relevance of theories.

Pedagogical practice and philosophy	If you believe in play-based learning, a theory that expresses its ideas within a structured class situation may not relate to your practice or philosophy. This might reduce their relevance.
Service context	If you work in a family day care setting but research long day care services or school-based education, the application of information may not be relevant to your work.
Child context	If you are researching theories about emotional health, you must research information relevant to children rather than adults.

Coaching and mentoring

There will be times when you may be able to provide expertise, another opinion or information backed by research to another educator.

When you provide information to colleagues, you are demonstrating professional practice and contributing to your own development. The following are some ways you might share information with colleagues and others.

Coaching

Coaching is the assistance provided to help someone achieve a specific goal. This can be an informal or formal relationship between a more experienced person who offers support or guidance to the other based on a certain task or objective. It focuses on what the individual needs to do more of to develop in a specific area. It is a one-on-one process normally implemented in a personalised approach.

A coach will work to break down barriers that may exist for the person trying to achieve a goal. This will allow them to gain clarity.

Coaching is a process of self-leadership that enables individuals to gain an understanding of who they are, what and why they are doing something, and where they want to go.

Mentoring

Mentoring can be either formal or informal depending on the type of support others need. Informal mentoring relationships occur naturally when a staff member finds they connect well with another more experienced or more knowledgeable person. Informal situations include working alongside the other person, offering support and encouragement as they show improvements or master a specific task. The relationship may continue for a long period of time and occurs naturally.

In a formal mentoring situation, you must first establish a positive relationship with the staff member you are working with. You need to have knowledge and skills that benefit the other person. Without these, the mentoring will not be effective, and the relationship will be strained and inevitably unsuccessful. Formal situations may include private meetings, setting goals with time frames and meeting regularly to discuss progress and further skill requirements. When you document these goals you can use this for later reflection and evaluation purposes.

Example

Coaching and mentoring

Clare is the leader of a small group of educators. She is also responsible for the students that complete placements. When working with her colleagues, Clare implements a mentoring approach. She wants the other educators to trust her, respect her, and learn to think and develop independently under her direction and support.

When working with students, Clare implements a coaching style. She takes time to understand their placement goals and supports them to achieve these in the short time they are provided. She gives more concrete and demonstrative support, knowing that the trainer/assessor of the students will provide further modelling and guidance.

Information sheets

Information sheets are a valuable resource that can provide staff with up-to-date information.

When particular changes, trends or practices are identified, information sheets can be used to share details concisely. How you use information sheets will determine their effectiveness.

Tips for writing information sheets

- Provide clear information with headings, paragraphs and spaces for easy reading.
- Include enough detail to convey the information, but not so much that it is confusing.
- Try to share any long or complicated information in a less complicated way.
- Create a flow chart of the procedure.
- Reference your research.
- Add pictures, diagrams or images if useful or to break up information.
- Ensure all the information is backed up with evidence from reputable sources.

Online pages

An intranet or social media site can be used by an organisation to provide staff with information.

The advantage of online pages is that they become a primary source of information and that only the most current information is available.

Example

Using online methods

Kimmy has researched some useful information about infant communication. She feels all staff and families working with the babies would benefit from reading this.

Kimmy decides that rather than print copies, she will upload the information on the staff intranet and social media page so both staff and families can access this at any time. She adds a response section, encouraging others to take the time to read the content, then add their own thoughts and ideas in relation to incorporating this information into the working environment.

Information sessions and meetings

Information sessions provide opportunities for all staff to collaborate, join together and learn or discover details relevant to their job role.

These sessions may consist of meetings in which staff focus on theory, philosophy or pedagogy. A collaborative meeting where all staff come together to reflect on information they have obtained from individual learning strategies, such as reading or researching, can also create a sharing working community.

When you are working closely with one person, regular catch-up times offer a more personalised and direct form of information exchange. They offer the opportunity for individuals to be more open and honest. One-to-one meetings can help individuals learn from each other, and express their feelings and emotions without being intimidated by others listening.

Effective communication is about gaining understanding. This requires open discussions. To achieve this, people in a discussion should:

- put forward their ideas and suggestions equally
- allow others to have their say without interrupting
- treat others with respect
- provide positive, constructive comments and feedback
- follow up with research, further thoughts or ideas if questions arise.

Example

Holding open discussions

Paula, a team leader, attends an online professional development session on children's mental health. During the two-hour presentation they network with other individuals from a variety of services across Australia. They discover lots of research, practices and support services.

Paula prints off the slides from the workshop and prepares to share the content at the next staff meeting.

Practice Task 3

1. Which of the following would you identify as the most authoritative, credible and reputable sources for researching information? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website
   - ☐ The local newspaper
   - ☐ A government website
   - ☐ An inexperienced educator

2. Karen is unsure how she feels about the service's decision to add online communication to the children's program. While the children's communication will be supervised and will occur between children in nearby services, Karen is not sure how this fits with her philosophy and pedagogy.

   Select the most relevant theory she should read about to enhance her knowledge.

   - ☐ Using technology for problem-solving
   - ☐ Children using technology in the early childhood curriculum

3. Karen researches information about the development of friendship in early childhood. She wants to share this with her seven colleagues to find out what they think and how they might incorporate the ideas into the curriculum.

   Select the most relevant method she should choose for sharing her knowledge.

   - ☐ One-to-one meetings
   - ☐ Information session

1D Curriculum theories

Current and emerging theories influence curriculum through being embedded in education and care services national standards and frameworks.

Additionally, curriculum theory may be introduced as part of educator development that informs a personal or service philosophy. You might see a variety of aspects of each curriculum theory in a service. However, a service whose philosophy is built on a particular curriculum theory will be noticeable.

History of play

Some theories and practices are linked to the history of understanding children's play.

These are included in the following table.

Historical importance	Theorist	Key concepts
In 1837 the first kindergarten was opened.	Froebel (1782–1852)	➢ Play is an important route to learning. ➢ Play and activity, through use of nature, teaches children to learn, observe, reason, express and create through play.
In 1907 the first Montessori school was opened.	Montessori (1870–1952)	➢ Play is the child's work. ➢ Play that is linked with sensory activity, and cognitive, social and emotional experiences provides optimum brain development. ➢ Active learning at the child's pace can develop cooperation and independence. ➢ Children are constantly learning in their everyday lives.
In 1919 Steiner opened his first school.	Steiner (1861–1925)	➢ Children need play in order to develop. ➢ Children need to use their imagination. ➢ Use natural materials where possible to enhance natural play and develop a sense of beauty and care. ➢ A love of lifelong learning can be built in early childhood. ➢ Moral and ethical abilities and the development of resilience can be supported in early childhood.

Historical importance	Theorist	Key concepts
In 1929 Parten's play stages theory was introduced.	Parten (1902–1970)	➢ Play has stages that involve: – solitary play – parallel play – associative play – cooperative play – play with rules – unoccupied play – onlooker play.
In 1936 Piaget's theory was introduced.	Piaget (1896–1980)	➢ Children are active learners. ➢ At each stage and age, children will use materials and learn differently. ➢ Children need to repeat activities over and over to practise skills and learn different things. ➢ Learning should be built around children's interests. ➢ Intelligence is not just an inborn trait; the environment can also contribute. ➢ Children develop skills and this helps them learn.
In 1926 Vygotsky's theory was introduced. In 1962 Vygotsky's theory was translated into English and became important in our understanding of children.	Vygotsky (1896–1934)	➢ Play stimulates thinking. ➢ Through play, children take on different roles and try out different ways to communicate. ➢ Play allows children to develop language and reasoning skills. ➢ Social learning occurs before development.
Following World War 2 a group of women raised money to set up a school where they hoped they could teach children tolerance, justice and equality. This inspired Malaguzzi and in 1963 the first Reggio Emilia preschool was opened.	Malaguzzi (1920–1994)	➢ Known as the Reggio Emilia approach, the focus is on the importance of the environment. ➢ Children learn through play. ➢ Play is essential to a child's wellbeing. ➢ Play is a method that allows both children and educators to learn. ➢ Both children and adults should work together to create the learning process.

The following are common philosophies that have either been influenced by or evolved through these historical developments:

- Emergent curriculum
- Reggio Emilia approach
- Montessori
- Te Whāriki
- Steiner
- Abecedarian

Emergent curriculum

Emergent curriculum is about being responsive to children and providing relevant and engaging curriculum for all children.

It is about providing a curriculum that evolves and develops with children, their community and environments.

Core beliefs and responsibilities	- Curriculum is:
	  – play-based
	  – focused on children's interests, strengths, aspirations, families, values, social and physical environment
	  – meaningful, relevant and engaging
	  – focused on progressing each child's learning and development toward learning framework outcomes
	  – child-initiated and educator-framed

Distinct curriculum features	- Focus on inquiry, investigation and projects. - Focus on scaffolding and intentional teaching. - New ideas are encouraged, built on and extended in both spontaneous and planned ways. - Children and adults are part of the planning and evaluation process. - Spontaneous responses to learning and development are encouraged. - Educators recognise and react to spontaneous emerging interests and teachable moments. - Plans evolve rather than being organised in advance.

Reggio Emilia approach

A Reggio Emilia curriculum is child-focused and uses children's relationships to lead learning.

It is based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community.

Core beliefs and responsibilities	➤ Curriculum is: – play-based – constructivist (learning is guided by the environment and community) – adaptable – planned experiences are extended based on children's interest and feedback – linked to emergent curriculum. ➤ Educators believe that: – children express their ideas through 'a hundred languages', meaning they express themselves in many ways each day, such as through painting, music and drama – the approach is aimed at instilling a love of learning – families and the community are responsible for children – families are partners and the child's first teachers – the environment is the third teacher.
Distinct curriculum features	➤ Children guide or direct their own learning. ➤ Children express themselves in many different ways and find out through listening, moving, touching and watching. ➤ Children are treated as capable and competent. ➤ Children are encouraged to explore, question and interpret the world. This includes finding out answers through research, inquiry and projects. ➤ Children stay with the same educators throughout their attendance in a service so a consistent relationship is built. ➤ The environment includes: – attractive and stimulating materials – nature-inspired spaces – open spaces free from clutter – displays of individual artwork – evolving spaces that change as children explore their interests and projects – authentic tools and materials, such as real hammers, cutlery, etc.

You can find out more about Reggio Emilia curriculum at: aspirelr.link/reggio-aust.

Montessori

A Montessori curriculum views a child as a unique individual who learns in different ways and at their own pace.

The following outlines the core beliefs and distinct features of a Montessori curriculum.

Core beliefs and responsibilities	➤ Curriculum is: – child-initiated – thoughtfully prepared – planned based on each individual child – focused on sensory exploration and scaffolding – linked to emergent curriculum. ➤ Educators believe: – children are eager to learn and gain knowledge – in the development of the whole child, including their physical, social, emotional, communication and cognitive areas – children should first develop order, then coordination, concentration and independence – the environment design, materials and routines help children to self-regulate their learning.
Distinct curriculum features	➤ Children are encouraged to self-regulate by thinking about their learning. ➤ Children are part of a family group, with a variety of ages together in the same room. ➤ Children are encouraged to mentor each other. ➤ Children enjoy freedom within certain limitations. ➤ Children make decisions about their own learning. ➤ Children look critically at their own work and recognise, correct and learn from mistakes. ➤ Educators model respect, kindness and peaceful conflict resolution. ➤ The environment includes: – self-correcting materials and equipment; for example, the child can see there is an issue due to a piece not fitting or a shape being left out – natural breakable materials, such as wood, ceramic, metal and glass – many experiences that develop fine motor skills.

You can find out more about Montessori curriculum at: aspirelr.link/montessori-aust.

Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki curriculum was developed in New Zealand and includes a list of learning goals or skills that the educator aims to teach children.

The Te Whāriki curriculum is informal. It is based on principles, strands and goals.

Principles:

- Whakamana – Empowerment
- Kotahitanga – Holistic development
- Whānau Tangata – Family and community
- Ngā Hononga – Relationships

Strands and goals are outlined below.

Strand	Goal
Strand 1: Mana Atua – Wellbeing	Children experience an environment where their health is promoted, their emotional wellbeing is nurtured and they are kept safe from harm.
Strand 2: Mana Whenua – Belonging	Children and their families experience an environment where: - connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended - they know that they have a place - they feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events - they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour.
Strand 3: Mana Tangata – Contribution	Children experience an environment where: - there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background - they are affirmed as individuals - they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.
Strand 4: Mana Reo - Communication	Children experience an environment where they: - develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes - develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes - experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures - discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.
Strand 5: Mana Aotūroa - Exploration	Children experience an environment where: - their play is valued as meaningful learning - the importance of spontaneous play is recognised - they gain confidence in and control of their bodies - they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning - they develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds.

Te Whāriki and the Australian education and care services approved learning frameworks are very similar. They are based on the same theories and pedagogies. The learning frameworks have adapted the definition of curriculum from Te Whāriki: 'All the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment are designed to foster children's learning and development'.

You can find out more about Te Whāriki at: aspirelr.link/te-whariki.

You can find the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks.

Steiner

Steiner curriculum follows a theory of child development that uses three learning strategies that cater for three stages of spiritual development.

The following outlines the core beliefs and distinct features of a Steiner curriculum.

Core beliefs and responsibilities	➢ Curriculum is: – regular and includes routines such as free play, artistic work, circle or group time, and practical tasks – inclusive of a variety of traditions and festivals from the community. ➢ Educators believe that: – love, warmth and guidance are required for healthy development – children's physical, behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual aspects can be stimulated to foster creative and inquisitive thought – children should lead their learning – children should feel that the world is a good place – electronic media (television and computers) should be used minimally because they limit physical activity, may display inappropriate content and reduce the imagination.
Distinct curriculum features	➢ Children imitate practical activities, such as cooking, painting, gardening, sewing and using tools. ➢ Children learn by example. ➢ Children are involved in imaginative and creative play. ➢ Children enjoy problem-solving. ➢ Educators promote a sense of wonder and imagination. ➢ Educators use stories, songs, creative play, nature and activities to involve children in their world. ➢ Educators use role-modelling and scaffolding to support child-led learning. ➢ The environment includes: – a homelike space with tools, toys and simple, natural materials – natural materials that can be used imaginatively – animals and gardens.

You can find out more about Steiner curriculum at: aspirelr.link/steiner-education-aust.

Abecedarian

The Abecedarian approach aims to support children's cognitive, social, emotional and communication skills with the goal of creating school readiness.

The Abecedarian approach was developed following a research study that showed that educators can increase their ability to provide stable and stimulating interactions with children by adding rich adult-to-child activities.

Core beliefs and responsibilities	➤ Curriculum is based on four key elements: – language priority – learning games – conversational reading – enriched care-giving. ➤ Educators believe that: – language is the number one priority – at-risk children develop well if provided with safe, responsive and stimulating environments.
Distinct curriculum features	➤ Children read books at an early age. ➤ Children are engaged in individual and pair reading using back and forth communication. ➤ Educators use words and language in fun ways throughout the day at each activity. ➤ Educators encourage children to talk, listen and learn language. ➤ Educators apply learning games and experiences – over a hundred games have been specifically developed for this approach. ➤ Educators add educational content to repeated daily routines.

You can find out more about Abecedarian curriculum at: aspirelr.link/abecedarian-approach.

Practice Task 4

1. Draw a line to match each theorist with their theory or historical relevance.

* Parten	* Opened the first kindergarten.
* Piaget	* There are seven different stages of social play, including solitary play, parallel play and play with rules.
* Vygotsky	* Children are active learners. At each stage and age, children will use materials and learn differently.
* Froebel	* Play allows children to develop language and reasoning skills.

2. Draw a line to match each curriculum approach with its core beliefs.

* Te Whāriki	* Children are encouraged to self-regulate as they are part of a family group.
* Steiner	* Educators promote a sense of wonder and imagination by using stories, songs, creative play, nature and activity to involve children in their world.
* Abecedarian	* Children express their ideas though 'a hundred languages', meaning that they express themselves in many ways each day, such as through painting, music and drama.
* Reggio Emilia	* This is based on the same theories and pedagogies as the Australian education and care services national learning frameworks.
* Montessori	* This is based on four key elements: language priority, learning games, conversational reading and enriched care-giving.

Summary

- Children have the right to feel safe, learn and play, and to have their basic needs provided for.
- Responsibilities have been set out for governments, communities, services, families and educators in the form of a National Quality Framework (NQF).
- The core principles of child development have been identified as important for all children to develop and learn successfully.
- The core principles include:
  - holistic development
  - sequence of development
  - rate of development
  - brain development
  - heredity
  - environment and active learning
  - critical periods and scaffolding
  - belonging, being and becoming
  - individualised learning
  - play as learning.
- Regulations, standards, policies and procedures are based on the results of theory and research.
- Educators must regularly research to check understanding and keep their knowledge up to date.
- When researching, you must use current and clear information that comes from a reliable source.
- Information should be authoritative, trusted as true and accurate, and credible, believable and convincing.
- Current and emerging theories influence curriculum by being embedded in education and care services national standards and frameworks.
- Some common philosophies have been influenced by or have evolved through historical developments.

Learning Checkpoint 1
Foundations of curriculum

1. Research and compare the following curriculum theories. Which curriculum theories use spontaneous inquiry, investigation and projects to build on and extend children's ideas? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Emergent curriculum
- [ ] Reggio Emilia
- [ ] Montessori
- [ ] Steiner
- [ ] Abecedarian
- [ ] AECDC

2. Compare the following curriculum theories and draw a line to match the way they might influence your philosophy and pedagogical practice.

* Montessori	* Treat children as capable and competent, encouraging them to explore, question and interpret the world so they find answers through research, inquiry and projects.
* Steiner	* Use words and language in fun ways throughout the day at each activity.
* Reggio Emilia	* Provide self-correcting materials and equipment.
* Abecedarian	* Use stories, songs, creative play, nature and activities to involve children in their world.

3. Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order the historical developments occurred.

- ☐ The first kindergarten was opened.
- ☐ The first Reggio Emilia preschool was opened.
- ☐ Montessori schools were introduced.
- ☐ The first Steiner school was opened.
- ☐ Parten's theory was recognised.
- ☐ The theories of Piaget and Vygotsky became important to our understanding of children.

4. Research and briefly describe (in one or two sentences) how the following core principles are important in relation to the child or service:

   a. Sequence and rate of development

   b. Brain development

   c. Belonging, being and becoming

d. Critical periods and scaffolding

5. Which of the following are the professional benefits of sharing information and developing strong, respectful relationships with other educators and families? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Extend your knowledge of each child.
- [ ] The curriculum can be planned with an individualised approach.
- [ ] Have someone to talk to throughout the day.
- [ ] Support each child's sense of belonging.
- [ ] Help children to feel that their belongings should be shared.

6. Draw a line to match the area of the curriculum to the correct standard, regulation, law, policy or procedure.

* Educational program and practice	* Section 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures
* Relationships with children	* Supervision policies and procedures
* Physical environment	* Element 3.2.2: Resources support play-based learning
* Health and safety	* Regulation 155: Interactions with children

7. List at least three components of the planning cycle.

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

- **2A** Holistic theories of development
- **2B** Cognitive development
- **2C** Communication development
- **2D** Emotional development
- **2E** Physical development
- **2F** Social development

Theories of development

Development is defined by a range of approaches and theories that guide you to identify the milestones children are expected to achieve.

These theories also provide educator development and an understanding of why children approach learning and development the way they do.

2A Holistic theories of development

Theories of development support milestones that occur in sequence.

Holistic theories help you understand how a child develops in a range of areas.

Development is not isolated into areas of learning. A child's physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication is interrelated.

Child development theories help to explain or predict development and behaviour. Understanding theories and milestones:

- helps you understand individual children and their physical needs
- helps you understand why children act and react the way they do
- can be used to inform your practice in terms of program design and curriculum development.

The following theories are holistic. This means that they relate to all areas of learning and development. They show how development is interrelated. Other theories will be explained later in this resource, as they relate to particular areas of development.

Temperament and personality

Temperament refers to the behavioural characteristics that shape reactions and responses, and is believed to be a trait that individuals are born with.

Temperament is mainly referred to when discussing infants and toddlers.

As children develop socially and emotionally, various positive and negative life experiences impact them, and their temperament may change as they begin to develop a personality that is not only based on inborn traits.

The temperament of a young child affects the way you interact with them, and may alter your expectations of a child. For some people, temperament influences how well they bond with a young child.

Although theorists have tried to describe temperaments as succinctly as possible, there is still a level of subjectivity as few children meet all of the documented and described behaviours.

There are three general types of temperament.

Easy temperament	Children with an easy temperament are cheerful, adaptable, fit well into routines and are positive in mood.
Slow to warm up temperament	Children who display a slow to warm up temperament adjust slowly to new experiences, tend to be negative in mood, inactive and show mild responses to the world around them.
Difficult temperament	Children with a difficult temperament are slow to adapt to new experiences, have strong reactions to change, have irregular routines, are negative in mood and are often withdrawn.

Some theorists, Alfred Adler and Rudolf Steiner in particular, believed that there are four temperaments, as described in the following table.

Temperament	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Sanguine	➤ Light-hearted ➤ Fun-loving ➤ A people-person ➤ Entertaining ➤ Spontaneous ➤ A leader ➤ Confident	➤ Arrogant ➤ Cocky ➤ Indulgent ➤ Impulsive ➤ Unpredictable
Choleric	➤ Lots of ambition ➤ Energetic ➤ Passionate ➤ Tries to instil passion in others	➤ Dominating ➤ Easily angered ➤ Bad-tempered ➤ Mean-spirited ➤ Suspicious ➤ Angry
Melancholic	➤ Thoughtful ➤ Kind and considerate ➤ Highly creative ➤ A perfectionist ➤ Particular about what they want and how they want it in some situations	➤ Overly preoccupied with tragedy and cruelty in the world ➤ Depressed ➤ Unsatisfied with their own work ➤ Constantly critical of themselves
Phlegmatic	➤ Calm ➤ Generally content ➤ Kind and compassionate ➤ Consistent and reliable ➤ Relaxed ➤ Rational ➤ Curious ➤ Observant ➤ Popular ➤ Loyal ➤ Dependable	➤ Resistant to change ➤ Lazy ➤ Unenthusiastic ➤ Unemotional

Adler and Steiner also stated that individuals may display parts of all four temperaments. However, they will be stronger in one compared to the other three.

Independence, autonomy and self-esteem are influenced by a child's temperament. A child with an easy, sanguine or choleric temperament may be more independent, autonomous and have a higher self-esteem than a child with a slow to warm up, difficult, melancholic or phlegmatic temperament.

Goodness of fit

You can adapt your interactions and responses to suit a child's temperament.

You may even be able to help those with a difficult or slow to warm up temperament to become more settled and ready for change.

Matching the environment and your interactions with the temperament of a child is called providing a 'goodness of fit' (Thomas and Chess). When attempting to provide goodness of fit, consider the characteristics outlined in the following table.

Factor	Considerations
Sensitivity	➤ How sensitive is the child to particular situations and experiences? ➤ Noise, room temperature, pain, smells, colours and textures affect everyone differently, so consider these when planning changes or actions.
Activity level	➤ Each child may require a different amount of activity – some children can be active all day without rest; others of the same age require a regular sleep or rest period. ➤ Children require both quiet and active choices throughout the day – be aware of individual children's needs and be flexible to ensure you cater for these.
Adaptability	➤ Constantly changing rooms, staff and routines is disruptive to children and may cause great anxiety in some. ➤ When a child is new to your service, establish a routine with minimal changes. ➤ Prepare children in advance for any changes that occur.
Approach	➤ For new children, use a familiar item or object to bridge your relationship and break down the barriers between you and the child, known as a transition action. ➤ Respect a child's need to take things slowly when dealing with new people, places or practices. Rushing things may only cause mistrust and create further difficulty in dealing with new situations. ➤ Children with a slow to warm up temperament may need their family member to stay longer than other children, so encourage this if necessary.
Attention span	➤ Be realistic in the time you expect a child to concentrate on one activity. ➤ In a group of children who have varying skills, temperaments and personalities, a number of children will be able to stick with an activity for a long period of time, while others will maintain only a brief concentration span. ➤ Ensure your routines and activities allow for differences between children.

The following information describes how temperament may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How temperament influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	When you provide 'goodness of fit', you are supporting the child based on their needs and giving them a feeling of worthiness and acceptance. These feelings allow the child to become independent and to learn self-help skills.
Separation and stranger anxiety	Children react differently to others based on their temperament. For example, a child with a phlegmatic temperament may be resistant to change. You can respond by: › considering how you introduce yourself to children › providing strategies for new people and situations based on what you know about the child's temperament › being sensitive to the child's ability to feel safe and secure.
Using mistakes to learn	› The child's temperament may influence their ability to see that they have responsibility in certain areas. › A child with a sanguine and choleric temperament may believe the issue is someone else's problem. › A child with a melancholic or phlegmatic temperament may believe they are totally responsible and blame themselves for making a mistake.

How the environment influences brain development

Heredity (nature) defines the framework of a brain, but the environment (nurture) influences its development.

Research shows that the quality of experiences and relationships during the first years of life has a massive and lasting impact on brain development. Rich environments, experiences and interactions result in faster and more meaningful learning. Environmental influences include:

- adequate rest and nutrition
- clean drinking water
- a safe environment
- appropriate materials and equipment
- adequate space for developing motor skills
- good oxygen supply
- appropriate levels of stimulation – over-stimulation can distract children.

It has been found that if a child is lovingly cared for and provided with stimulating, meaningful interactions and activity at critical learning periods, the child's brain will develop to a greater extent. This means that the brain wiring will form stronger and more permanent connections than it otherwise would.

Ultimately, the more positive experiences a child has, the greater their ability to learn and develop in early childhood and throughout their lives.

The following information describes how the theory of brain development may influence your practice in some areas.

Development	How brain development influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	The synapses that are created as children develop new skills and knowledge allow them to make choices and become more independent and autonomous.
Attention span	Attention span and the ability to become engaged and involved in an experience are brain development outcomes. Synapses need to become strong in the area of interest for this to occur, as does the ability to focus thought and ignore other stimulation.
Exploring and experimenting	The brain is developed through exploring, learning and understanding. The skills learnt through these actions enable the child to develop and increase their ability to build on existing knowledge, skills and interests. They also encourage a positive attitude towards trying new things.
Problem-solving	The skills learnt through solving problems lead to further brain development, and enable the child to develop their ability to be independent and autonomous.
Consequences and feelings	Brain development involves: › understanding and recognising feelings › developing appropriate responses to feelings › understanding that actions have consequences › understanding that some consequences are positive and desirable, whereas some are not desirable.

Ecological approach

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological approach, where the entire environment and any connecting or influencing forces are shown to impact on all aspects of a child's development.

The theory relates to the wider view of belonging and shows how the child is impacted by various connections.

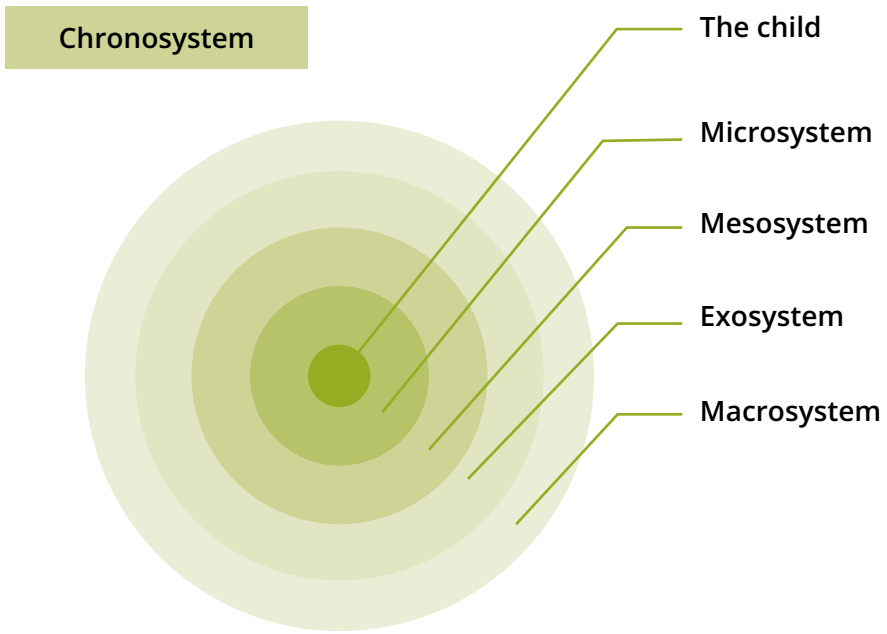
The connecting or influencing forces that may impact a child and their sense of belonging include:

- family members, carers, educators, babysitters and others that make up the child's world
- culture and traditions of family members, carers, educators and the community
- events that occur in the family and community
- settings and their values
- parent workplaces and conditions
- government decisions and laws.

The ecological approach highlights the need for you to consider the broader situation of each child, their family and the other influences in their lives. Use this to determine how these affect the child's needs and to feel a sense of belonging. The ecological approach is represented by structures that comprise central forces that influence the child, as described in the following table.

Ecological structure	What this includes	Examples
Microsystem ('micro' means small)	Relationships that include face-to-face interaction between the child and others	➢ Home ➢ Education and care service ➢ Play group ➢ Relatives ➢ Friends
Mesosystem ('meso' means in the middle)	Relationships between two or more settings that the child is involved in	➢ Education and care service and parents ➢ Kindergarten, education and care service ➢ Relatives and parents
Exosystem ('exo' means outside or external)	Even though the child does not directly participate in these relationships or settings, they have a direct influence on the child	➢ Parent's workplace and associated conditions ➢ Community support services ➢ Support organisations ➢ Government
Macrosystem ('macro' means large)	These systems influence the culture and beliefs of the family	➢ Religion ➢ Laws ➢ Customs ➢ Barriers
Chronosystem ('chrono' means time)	The time frame in which the child's life is set; for example, 2020	

The ecological theory is usually depicted in a circular diagram such as the following.



Ecological approach in practice

In order to apply the ecological approach, you need to understand how it influences development.

The following table describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How the ecological approach influences practice
Sense of belonging	Children feel belonging, not just based on the environment you provide, but when the forces that influence their lives are considered and supported. This means that educators must develop relationships with those who surround the child and take into consideration the whole child and their connections.
Self-help skills and independence	Relationships and systems in the child's world influence the child's ability to become independent and autonomous. For example, if the child is given the message that they are not capable, they will not attempt tasks.
Relationship preferences	The child's web of interactions throughout life influences their choice of peer and adult relationships.
Ethical development	The child's cultural links and life experiences influence their understanding of ethics and how they treat others.
Problem-solving	The child's environment and its associated links provide messages to the child demonstrating: ➤ whether they should make decisions ➤ what decisions should be made ➤ how confident others are in the child's ability to do this. To empower the child, provide messages and activities in the environment that require decision-making. When you do this, you are creating a place where children feel they belong, as they are making decisions about their environment.
Listening to children's views	Each child has a different life experience based on the intertwining and influencing people and environments they are exposed to. These variations are an indication of how many different ideas and views you will encounter in relation to each topic of discussion you may have with a child and their family.
Using mistakes to learn	The messages in the child's environment indicate whether or not it is safe to take responsibility. This theory links with all the other approaches as the messages come from needs, fear, unpredictability, attachment and modelling.

Humanistic theory

Psychology theorist Abraham Maslow identified basic needs that must be met before someone can progress to satisfying more complex needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the needs of children and adults. You may recognise this theory presented in the following pyramid.

The hierarchy of needs illustrates the following:

- Once our basic physical needs are met (food, rest, sleep and basic body functions), emotional needs can be addressed.
- Safety, security and limits allow us to feel that our emotional needs are being met and acknowledged.
- Love and belonging support our feelings of being needed.
- Self-esteem and the need for respect, attention and appreciation are directly linked to how we experience and react to feelings, fears and change, and how we feel others will experience and react to these.
- Someone who is emotionally cared for and confident can attempt to be all they can be, including becoming independent and autonomous.

Humanistic theory in practice

Maslow's theory helps you recognise priorities in caring for children; you must make sure the lower-level needs are met before you can help satisfy the higher-level needs.

For example, if a child feels insecure and unsafe (second-level needs), they will not feel loved and cared for (third-level needs). They may not participate fully in the experiences you plan and may not develop secure relationships with educators. The child's developmental progress may be affected as they are focused on being safe and secure, rather than being involved and challenged.

The following information describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How humanistic theory influences practice
Belonging	A variety of needs must be met before children feel a sense of belonging. Belonging is the result of ongoing consistent meeting of needs. When a child feels a sense of belonging, they will develop a level of self-esteem that supports them to learn and increase their potential.
Self-help skills and independence	An emotionally cared for and confident child can attempt to be all they can be; this includes becoming independent and autonomous, and developing self-help skills.
Using mistakes to learn	The foundation of success is required for children to be able to safely and securely take responsibility for their actions. It may result in fear that their basic needs may not be met. Punishment can have this effect as it can cause the child to hide from their responsibility.

Social learning theory

Albert Bandura's social learning theory links a person's environment, behaviour and psychological processes, including imagination and language.

Bandura believes that behaviour is affected by the environment (modelling) and that this modelling does not cause learning, but motivates children to demonstrate what they have learnt.

Bandura's theory includes self-esteem as a central influence and suggests that self-regulation (controlling your own behaviour) is combined with modelling and behaviour reinforcement to create someone's personality and how they behave.

There are three parts to this self-esteem theory:

- Self-observation – Looking at yourself and monitoring how you behave or act.
- Judgment – Comparing what you observe in yourself with a model or expectation; these models or expectations may be traditionally imposed (such as using manners) or self-imposed (such as wanting to read a book each week).
- Self-response – Measuring how your self-observation meets your judgment.

These three parts link together and are influenced by past experiences and how someone measures themselves. If someone has high expectations of themselves or measures themselves through competition with others, they are more likely to have low self-esteem, as they might battle to meet these expectations.

Bandura believed there are certain stages required if modelling is to influence behaviour:

- attention
- retention
- reproduction
- motivation.

The following table elaborates on each of these stages.

Modelling stage	What this means	Positive modelling	Negative modelling
Attention	Children need to pay attention to learn from modelling. It helps if the modelling is attractive and enjoyable.	If positive actions and interactions are modelled in ways that are encouraging and enthusiastic, children will want to reproduce these as they will see the benefit.	If negative actions and interactions are modelled and these are shown to work in achieving a goal or to have an influence, then these negative actions may be modelled.
Retention	To learn from any modelling, children need to pay attention to what is happening to retain the process. The cognitive processes of imagery and memory are important.	Consistent and repeated modelling of positive actions and interactions allow children to take them on; seeing them regularly helps them to remember.	If children do not regularly see positive modelling, they will not be able to remember and repeat.
Reproduction	To reproduce what has been modelled, children need to have the skill to do this.	Reproducing skills such as problem-solving, negotiation and conflict resolution requires support, encouragement and guidance.	Negative actions are sometimes easier to reproduce as they often require minimal skill. For example, it is easier to hit another child and grab a toy than to problem-solve and negotiate unless these skills have been developed.
Motivation	The motivation to reproduce modelled actions involves encouragement or reinforcement.	Children can be motivated to reproduce positive actions that are modelled, if they link them to positive reinforcements or rewards. A reward means that something is gained from the action, such as a positive outcome or an enjoyable experience.	Children can be motivated to reproduce negative actions that are modelled if they are linked to positive reinforcements. When negative modelling receives positive reinforcement, difficult behaviour can develop. This is why you must consider what children gain from negative behaviour when developing behaviour plans.

Social learning theory in practice

Bandura believes that punishment is not an effective reinforcement tool as it can often turn into an attention-gaining activity, which may be a form of positive reinforcement for the child.

He suggests that the strategies outlined in the following table are useful for developing self-control and hence positive behaviour.

Strategy	Implementation
Self-control therapy	➢ Assist the child to understand which behaviours are inappropriate and which behaviours are desirable. ➢ Assist and support the child to manage this behaviour by: – using reflection – addressing issues as they arise – identifying triggers – changing the environment where possible.
Modelling therapy	➢ This strategy relies on you demonstrating to the child how a situation may be dealt with in a positive way. You may do this by: – explaining – giving examples – undertaking pretend play – modelling a situation.

The following table describes how social learning theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How social learning theory influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	➢ A child's level of self-esteem can be directly linked to their ability to be independent and autonomous.
Relationship preferences	➢ Modelling is an effective strategy for learning. A child learns from a preferred adult or child more readily than a person they do not relate to. ➢ Preferred adults more readily provide self-control therapy where appropriate behaviour is modelled. ➢ Positive reinforcement encourages interactions to extend.
Ethical development	➢ Modelling influences a child's understanding of ethics and their experience of prosocial skills and expectations.
Problem-solving	➢ The child's self-esteem is reflected in their ability to confidently decide. The child may choose above or below their ability. ➢ To empower the child, you should model decision-making skills and abilities, and provide positive feedback when the child attempts to make decisions.

Development	How social learning theory influences practice
Listening to children's views	➤ When children feel their views are listened to, they are more likely to express themselves. ➤ In situations where children express inappropriate views (such as a strong gender or racial bias), your ability to use self-control therapy (assisting the child to adopt more appropriate attitudes) is useful. ➤ When you listen to, acknowledge and value the views of children, they learn from your actions and then are able to respect others' views.
Using mistakes to learn	If you model accepting responsibility, it will be demonstrated by the children. This does not mean you must tell the children when you have made a major mistake at work or home, but sharing smaller and more relevant mistakes could be useful. For example: ➤ 'I didn't put out enough things. I will need to fix that.' ➤ 'I dropped the cup. Now I need to clean up the pieces.' ➤ 'I just stood on the toy. I hope it didn't break!'

Example

Social learning theory in practice

Here are some potential thoughts a child may have that link with self-esteem.

Example	Self-observation thoughts	Judgment thoughts	Self-response thoughts	High or low self-esteem?
Example 1	When I played catch with Nelson, I dropped the ball three times. Nelson threw the ball to me and it was out of my reach, but I should have been quicker. I missed the other catch as it was coming towards my face, but I should be braver. Nelson only drops the ball sometimes and he never looks away.	If I was good at ball games, I wouldn't drop the ball at all and I would not be scared when it comes toward my face.	I am bad at ball games. Nelson is much better than me. Maybe I should avoid playing with the ball. I should give up. I am hopeless. I don't know why Nelson asks me to play catch.	Low self-esteem

Example	Self-observation thoughts	Judgment thoughts	Self-response thoughts	High or low self-esteem?
Example 2	Today when I played catch with Nelson, I dropped the ball a couple of times, but the other times I did really well. The ball nearly hit my nose, but I looked away and it was fine.	I have good ball skills and do my best to catch the ball. I only drop it sometimes. If I feel scared because the ball comes towards my face that's okay because it hurts if it hits my nose.	I am pretty good at ball games. I like playing with Nelson and he always asks me to play catch with him.	High self-esteem
Example 3	Today Nelson asked me to play catch. When I played catch, I laughed a lot. Nelson and I had fun and we played for ages.	I have fun playing catch and my skills in the game don't matter too much.	I like ball games and I have lots of fun. Nelson asks me to play catch nearly every day.	High self-esteem

Sociocultural theory

Lev Vygotsky believed that social interaction not only increases levels of knowledge, but also changes children's thoughts and behaviour.

He believed that when children are exposed to a variety of social and cultural experiences, their world becomes richer and their perceptions of the world become more open and positive.

The sociocultural theory suggests there are three ways that learning is passed to individual children:

1. Imitative learning where the child copies another person.
2. Instructed learning where the child is directed and then puts the information to use.
3. Collaborative learning where the child works with their peer group, cooperating and learning about each other to achieve goals.

The sociocultural theory shows a link between social, communication and cognitive development, and how cultural experiences provide opportunities for learning.

Emerging skills

New skills emerge when children gain greater control over their bodies, are introduced to ideas, or come into contact with materials they have not used or seen before.

These opportunities challenge your planning and organisational ability as you must identify the right time to introduce new ideas and extend on children's learning.

To support emerging skills, provide spontaneous practice of skills, particularly as children participate in routine times. Over the course of the day, many skills will be used, such as:

- washing hands
- dressing and undressing for weather conditions, toilet and/or rest
- applying sunscreen
- eating and using utensils, cups and cutlery
- manipulating play materials.

Opportunities for children to develop emerging skills vary according to factors such as:

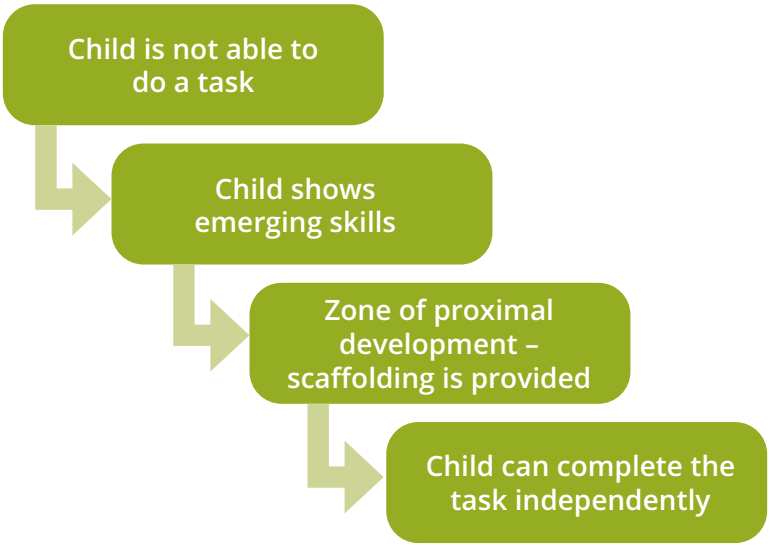
- the physical environment
- the service's purpose
- the amount and type of support from parents
- the level of participation by parents
- the level of support available to the service from external bodies, such as advice specialist services, resource workers and inclusion support workers
- how frequently the child uses the service
- the child's age.

Zone of proximal development

You will notice emerging skills, which are abilities that are just beginning to develop.

When a child is beginning to take an interest in learning a skill, you may need to provide guidance to assist the child until they have developed and mastered this skill themselves. Guide children's learning by providing a learning environment where play experiences and intentional teaching help the children develop skills.

Vygotsky calls this time of learning the 'zone of proximal development'. The zone demonstrates how children learn. The child moves from not being able to do a task, to doing it with guidance, to doing it on their own.



Vygotsky provides a clear picture of how these emerging skills are influenced by children's social environment and community. The strategies for supporting the child at this stage are based on scaffolding. The period of time when these skills are developing (during the zone of proximal development) are also called teachable moments, critical learning periods and windows of opportunity.

You can scaffold learning through:

- intentional teaching
- play-based learning
- assessing current skills and knowledge and providing additional support and information
- using what the child already knows or can do and adding to this slowly
- breaking tasks into small, manageable steps
- giving feedback and encouragement
- using verbal cues and prompts
- providing resources, materials and equipment
- demonstrating skills
- allowing the child to see how others do the task.

The child's emotional and psychological development impacts on the effectiveness of the scaffolding based on their level of self-esteem.

Reciprocal teaching

Reciprocal teaching, another aspect of the sociocultural theory, extends scaffolding into leadership.

One person, an educator, older child or more confident or capable child, alternates leadership of the conversation until the child becomes confident in this role and assumes a leadership and instructional role themselves. Leadership builds on and increases the child's level of independence and autonomy.

Reciprocal teaching is one benefit gained by grouping children in 'family groupings', meaning that the children of a variety of ages are grouped together and learn from each other.

Sociocultural theory in practice

Sociocultural theory focuses on the child's emerging skills and uses scaffolding to support emerging skill development.

You can recognise emerging skills by noticing what children say and do, and then act to scaffold this learning.

When children are being challenged positively or are experiencing an achievement, you may notice the following.

What the child may say	What cues they may give	What you can do
➤ 'I want to do this.' ➤ 'How do you do this?' ➤ 'Why is it like that?' ➤ 'What do I do?'	➤ Trying something you haven't noticed them do before ➤ Watching others do something they cannot do themselves	➤ Provide modelling and demonstration ➤ Provide technology and appropriate materials ➤ Inform others so they can support the child ➤ Encourage the child

Your reaction to and expectations of children can greatly affect the scaffolding you provide and a child's enjoyment of experiences. When you have appropriate expectations of children, you make an effort to ensure that the environment meets their needs, that they are challenged and that your response shows you understand that learning takes time. You should also expect that while skills are being developed, children will occasionally make mistakes, have accidents, make poor decisions and explore different options.

To build on these learning opportunities, you may do the following:
➤ Comment on the child's use of problem-solving skills to help them see that persistence is useful and mistakes help them learn; for example, saying, 'Wow! Great effort in trying to solve that problem!'
➤ Ask the child about ways to succeed in the future and comment positively about their ability to plan what they can do.
➤ Tell the child you can see they are trying and that this is important.
➤ Ask the child what they found out from the experience.
➤ Respond in the least dramatic yet positive way possible; for example, if the child has knocked some things off the table as they tried to spread their work out, instead of commenting, 'Oh no, what a mess', frame your comment positively; for example, 'Let's see how we can make more room.'
➤ Provide additional time, space, materials, resources, support and encouragement.
➤ Challenge children and provide ideas and experiences that take their learning to the next stage.
➤ Guide children to look for answers by imitating what they see in others, listening to instruction and working as part of a group.
➤ Provide opportunities for children to expand their current knowledge base.

Be prepared to consider things from the child's perspective. The most effective way to do this is by continually providing a child-focused curriculum.

Using scaffolding to challenge children

Scaffolding helps to provide an appropriate level of challenge to a child who is ready to progress in their learning.

The power of scaffolding and challenging children is demonstrated through your understanding of the following:

- Behaviourist theory – Positive reinforcement encourages success.
- Humanistic theory – Emotional security and a high self-esteem allow children to be successful in their pursuits.
- Psychosocial theory – Conflicts that result in positive outcomes help children grow into productive and stable adults.
- Social learning theory – Self-image affects self-esteem.

The following information describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How the sociocultural theory influences practice

Self-help skills and independence	- Self-help skills are learnt through each of the three ways of learning:
	  – imitative learning
	  – instructed learning
	  – collaborative learning.

Relationship preferences	- A child may learn more effectively if they receive modelling via a child or adult they relate to or prefer.
Ethical development	- Social and cultural experiences open the child's world so they can see alternatives to their norm, learn about others and how they would like to be themselves.
Problem-solving	- The world around us provides the child with many opportunities to explore. The art of understanding and solving problems forms part of this world of opportunities, as peers and others provide their input and modelling, agree or disagree and offer new considerations. - To empower the child, offer choices so they can practise decision-making. This may occur during scaffolding as you provide different methods for completing a task or ask the child how they may do the task differently. - Children have many opportunities to explore the world around them. The art of understanding and solving problems forms part of this world of opportunities, as peers and others provide their input and modelling, agree or disagree, and offer new considerations.

Development	How the sociocultural theory influences practice
Attention span	➤ A child's emerging skills and the scaffolding they are provided are linked together by their attention span. The child must concentrate for some time on the scaffolding to benefit from it. ➤ In reciprocal learning, attention is required between the child and an adult or another child to ensure the greatest benefit from the opportunity.
Exploring and experimenting	➤ A child has many opportunities to explore the world around them. The art of understanding and solving problems forms part of this world of opportunities, and your planned and spontaneous input provides modelling and stimulation.
Consequences and feelings	➤ Children are seen as worthy of being listened to, so their views are important to the whole program, creating a child-centred environment. ➤ Children are given time to express themselves. This includes time to think about their ideas and views and to express them in ways they feel are appropriate; for example, through art, craft, discussion or emotional reactions. ➤ The social and cultural aspects of this theory support the involvement of children in the investigation of natural and logical consequences, as these relate to how the world operates and allow the child to learn from their environment and those around them.
Using mistakes to learn	➤ Part of the scaffolding you provide should include the limits of the experience. For example, if a child is learning to set the table, you might clarify that they know to put a spoon, fork, cup and plate at each place. You would also let them know that if they forget something it is okay. ➤ By doing this you are letting the child know that they can accept responsibility for their actions without being placed in an unsafe or unpredictable situation. The child is then more likely to say, 'I will fix that' when a mistake occurs, rather than being upset or hiding the issue.

Example
Providing scaffolding

Belinda is an educator who has previously observed Josie (three and a half years) at the collage table tearing paper and pasting. Today Belinda puts scissors onto the table.

Josie picks up a pair of scissors and holds them in two hands, opening and shutting them. She puts a piece of paper in the scissors, then with both hands opens and closes the scissors on the paper.

Josie is demonstrating an emerging skill – using scissors. Belinda notices this skill by observing Josie. By supporting Josie's emerging scissor-cutting skills through scaffolding, Josie will gain confidence and competence over time, until she can independently cut using scissors.

Josie's educators will help her to hold the scissors correctly by providing fine motor strengthening activities like pegs and play dough, and will sit with Josie at the cutting experience, and support and encourage her efforts. If Josie has trouble opening and shutting the scissors, the educators can provide scissors with springs that help with this motion.

Other ways Josie may experience scaffolding are seeing other children using scissors, using scissors at home or seeing adults use scissors.

Behaviourist theory

Behaviourists believe that the environment and interactions alone influence behaviour and learning.

If positive responses are provided, the child learns to act that way. If negative responses are provided, the child ceases the behaviour. This theory (also called operant conditioning) is based on a system of reward and punishment, and particularly on positive reinforcement.

A number of theorists have worked with this theory, including Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike and Watson. Each has a specific take on the theory, but all are based on positive reinforcement.

Example
Positive reinforcement

Lucy is three years old. Last week she spoke in front of the group during show-and-tell. Her educator told her how well she did and that she seemed very confident. Due to this positive reinforcement, Lucy wants to talk in front of the group again.

Behaviourist theory in practice

The following information describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How behaviourist theory influences practice
Relationship preferences	Children may receive a positive reward from a relationship. They may feel enjoyment, reach goals, experience increased self-esteem or another type of positive reinforcement.
Listening to children's views	When children participate and provide their ideas and views, and these are listened to and responded to, the child is receiving positive reinforcement. They will take this as a sign that they should continue doing this.

Example

Behaviourist theory and emotional development

Rosie is four years old. She often cries when she is away from home. Today she is on a beanbag crying. Usually Peggy, an educator, asks Rosie what's wrong and Rosie will not answer. Today, Peggy asks Rosie if she is okay. Rosie looks up and says that she misses her mum and is sad. Peggy tells Rosie how brave she is and that she is pleased that Rosie can talk about how she feels. Peggy gives Rosie a hug and helps her find a quiet activity to do.

The next day, Rosie comes to Peggy when she arrives. She tells her that she feels sad about her mum not being there. Peggy says how proud she is that Rosie can tell her that she is sad, and helps her become involved in some activities.

Practice Task 5

1. Which of the following statements about holistic theories of development are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Albert Bandura's social learning theory includes self-esteem as a central influence. It suggests that self-regulation (controlling our own behaviour) is combined with modelling and behaviour reinforcement to create our personality and how we behave. * Yes * No

b. Behaviourists believe that the environment and interactions alone influence behaviour and learning. If positive responses are provided, the child learns to act that way. If negative responses are provided, the child ceases the behaviour. * Yes * No

c. The most effective way to deal with children's perspectives is to provide a curriculum based on educators' ideas. * Yes * No

d. The zone of proximal development demonstrates how children learn in all areas and that they learn best if they select self-directed learning opportunities. Educators can scaffold learning through intentional teaching and but children need to respond by giving feedback and showing they have been encouraged. * Yes * No

e. As all developmental domains are interrelated, if educators research holistic theory that comes from an authentic source, they will gain all the information they need about the child. * Yes * No

f. The ecological theory and humanistic theory both include research that supports the importance of developing a child's sense of belonging. * Yes * No

2B Cognitive development

Cognitive development is about how the brain functions, develops and makes sense of information.

It involves the development of thinking and learning, and relates to aspects such as:

- language
- attention span
- planning
- creativity
- problem-solving
- memory.

Cognitive development is influenced by a range of theories, including holistic theories such as the following:

Planning and problem-solving are aspects of cognitive development.

- Maturation/nature versus nurture – A child may have inborn traits that enable them to develop certain skills (such as cognitive skills) more readily than others.
- Temperament and personality – Children who are timid are less likely to experiment and use trial and error as they may be afraid to make mistakes.
- Brain development – The connections within the brain influence how learning and practice links and strengthens these connections.
- Sociocultural theory – Identifies scaffolding as a method for learning. A child's level of cognitive development has a high dependence on the child's experiences and the opportunities they have been exposed to.
- Behaviourist theory – When we present positive models and approaches, children will be intrigued and more likely to learn.

Other developmental areas are reliant on cognitive function. Without thinking and understanding, a person is unable to process information, control their bodies or make sense of the world.

Cognitive development influences

Cognitive development is influenced by a range of factors.

Some of these factors and their influence on cognitive development are outlined in the following table.

Factor	Influence on cognitive development
Age	Children progress through cognitive stages sequentially. Their understanding increases as their brains develop and they are able to understand more complex concepts. An example of cognitive sequence and milestones is that children aged three to five often ask 'Why' questions.

Factor	Influence on cognitive development
Gender	Traditionally boys have been known to show more interest in science, mathematics and technology. This usually occurs based on the types of experiences they are presented with and drawn to. You can alter experiences to make them more attractive to both genders; for example, adding the doll house to the train set or uniforms to the home area. You should offer experiences equally to children of all genders.
Family background, beliefs and cultural practices	Family interest or accessibility to a diverse range of concepts and interests can influence the child's understanding of the world and what it has to offer. This may influence the child's opportunities for learning. In some families, children are expected to attain high levels of educational achievement. This may lead to different expectations about play and enjoyment, attitudes to learning and teaching methods. Some families are not aware of the learning behind 'Why' questions, which restricts learning opportunities.
Ability	Genetic level of intelligence influences the child's ability. The environment adds to their capabilities; however, some limitations may occur due to developmental challenges, such as how well a child understands concepts or whether a material or resource is accessible. Some children may be naturally higher in intelligence and are able to ask questions and calculate information in a way that builds their understanding and interest.
Temperament	Children with particular temperaments may be more likely to participate in activities that are social rather than cognitive. Some temperaments may find cognitive experiences challenging or frustrating.
Interests	Some children are drawn to activities that involve investigation, exploration and experimentation, some are naturally curious and question constantly.
Peer groups	Peers learn from each other in play, as information is shared. Children may add their own cognitive skills and knowledge to the play environment, asking questions or relating their understanding or interests to others.

Cognitive learning

The concepts of cognitive learning link with brain development, but are more about the process of learning new things.

The process of cognitive learning involves four concepts, which are explained in the following table.

Schemata	Schemata are mental representations of things we know: perceptions, ideas and/or actions. They are the basic building blocks of thinking and expand as new information is learnt. Schemata relate to synapses in brain development. Synapses are the physical connections made in the brain, which hold schemata.
Assimilation	Assimilation occurs when new information is received. We use assimilation to match a new event or object with information we already know. When we link new information with our current ideas, it is easier for us to develop understanding and then accept the new information.
Accommodation	Accommodation occurs when new information is understood and recognised. New schemata are developed when accommodation occurs and the new events or objects are understood and remembered.
Equilibration	Equilibration is the term used to describe our need to assimilate and accommodate new information and create new schemata to understand the world. Equilibration relates to the way we try to find logic in events and objects in our desire to understand them.

Example
Cognitive learning

Xavier's family visits a farm. Xavier is fascinated by the goat in the yard and calls out, 'Dog!' His parents explain to him that this is not a dog; it's a goat. They show him the other goats and listen to the sounds they make. They talk about what the goats are eating and what they look like.

As they walk around the farm, Xavier points to every goat he sees and yells, 'Goat!'

Xavier demonstrates the following constructivist learning concepts:

- Schemata: Xavier already has ideas and perceptions about dogs. He has a pet dog at home and he knows lots of information about this dog.
- Assimilation: Xavier links the goat with the dog, as there are similarities. Xavier knows about dogs and expects the goat to link with the ideas he already has. Xavier's parents provide new information so that he can develop new ideas (schemata) about what a goat is.
- Accommodation: Xavier uses the information given by his parents to develop an understanding of goats. He can now identify the differences between a goat and a dog.
- Equilibration: Xavier demonstrates equilibration as he listens and thinks about what his parents are telling him. He wants to make sense of this new creature. He correctly points out goats for the rest of his time at the farm.

Constructivist theory

Jean Piaget worked in cognitive theory and strongly believed that we learn as constructivists.

A constructivist is someone who learns actively from the world around them and develops (or constructs) meaning from it. Educators who follow this theory encourage children to think about the activities and experiences provided, and support children socially and emotionally.

The following table explains some of Piaget's ideas about constructivist learning.

Learner	➤ Is individual and has their own background, needs and culture. ➤ Is influenced by culture and the world view, including the language, logic and mathematics they are exposed to. ➤ Must interact with others to acquire social meaning. ➤ Initiates their own learning. ➤ Has a potential for learning that is influenced by their feelings of independence and autonomy.
Educator	➤ Should adapt to provide what the learner needs. ➤ Should facilitate learning by encouraging problem-solving and decision-making related to what they are learning. ➤ Should ask questions, observe and guide, create an open learning environment, and interact consistently and frequently. ➤ Should encourage the child to be an independent thinker.

Constructivist stages span from birth to adolescence. The stages occur at approximate ages and will overlap at times. They include:

- sensorimotor stage
- preoperational stage
- conservation.

If a child has entered a stage of overlap, you may observe abilities expected in two different stages, which indicates the child's emerging skills.

Sensorimotor stage

The sensorimotor stage is the first stage of cognitive development.

It spans from birth to approximately two years and is determined by the child's use of physical actions to explore with their senses. Children in this stage are only able to think about people or events in the current situations they are in.

There are six sub-stages of the sensorimotor stage; each of these has clear characteristics and relates to the concept of object permanence. Object permanence is the process of learning that leads to recognising that an object exists even if it can no longer be seen. Infants have fully developed object permanence by the age of one. This development helps explain why infants are fascinated with toys and games that involve hiding and finding.

The following table outlines the sub-stages of the sensorimotor period through the characteristics that indicate each one.

Sensorimotor sub-stage	Characteristics	Examples	Object permanence
Sub-stage 1: Reflexive (Birth to approximately one month)	➤ Reflexes are used. ➤ There is little or no imitation.	➤ The child is occupied by inborn reflexes: looking about, grasping and sucking.	➤ None. Unable to find an object even when watching while it is hidden.
Sub-stage 2: Primary circular reactions (Approximately one to four months)	➤ Simple motor actions are centred on the child's own body. ➤ The child copies another person's behaviour.	➤ Opening and closing fingers. ➤ If the child blows bubbles and this is repeated by an adult, the child will do it a second time.	➤ None. Unable to find an object even when watching while it is hidden.
Sub-stage 3: Secondary circular reactions (Approximately four to eight months)	➤ Actions are oriented towards recapturing interesting effects. ➤ The child imitates the behaviour of a model, but only if the action is one the child has already learnt.	➤ The child may shake a rattle to repeat the effect gained or kick their feet to make a mobile move. ➤ If the child is able to gurgle and an adult gurgles to the child, the child may repeat the action.	➤ Able to retrieve a partially hidden object. ➤ Unable to find a completely hidden object even when it is hidden while the child is watching.
Sub-stage 4: Coordination of secondary circular reactions (Approximately eight to 12 months)	➤ Actions are goal-directed and serve as a means to an end. ➤ The child can imitate actions that are slightly different from the ones they have already learnt.	➤ The child may reach out (the means) to grab a toy (the end). ➤ If the child can gurgle and an adult gurgles with a start/stop action, the child may imitate. ➤ The child is excited by pop-up toys and hide-and-find games as they challenge their development of object permanence.	➤ Able to retrieve a partially hidden object from the first location it is hidden in, but will not look in a second hiding place. ➤ The child is beginning to understand that objects exist when out of sight – this links with the onset of separation anxiety.

Sensorimotor sub-stage	Characteristics	Examples	Object permanence
Sub-stage 5: Tertiary circular reactions (Approximately 12 to 18 months)	➤ The child explores the properties of objects by acting on them. ➤ The child imitates unfamiliar actions.	➤ The child explores objects through sucking, biting, throwing, etc. ➤ If the child cannot clap but an adult claps in play, the child can imitate the action.	➤ The child is able to search in successive locations for a hidden toy.
Sub-stage 6: Mental representation (Approximately 18 months to two years)	➤ There is now some symbolic representation. ➤ The child has a good memory of objects and events.	➤ The child may cradle a doll or make a 'brrroomm' noise as they push a car around on the floor.	➤ Able to find hidden objects without first seeing the hiding action.

Preoperational stage

The preoperational stage spans from approximately two to seven years and is determined by the child's use of exploration, imagination and symbolic representation, including language development.

Children in this stage are egocentric; that is, they can only see things from their point of view.

In this second stage of constructivist development, logical thought is not consistent. This is caused by some underdeveloped skills and predictable preoperational processes, including those outlined in the following table.

Process	Characteristic	Example	Effects you might notice
Transductive reasoning	The child makes errors by connecting two unrelated events or objects. This may occur if two things happen in close succession, causing the child to think they are related.	Ferner slams the door. At the same moment, his friend Greg slips over on the path nearby. Although the sandy path is what causes Greg to slip, Ferner believes that slamming the door is the cause because of the timing. The next day Kerryn slams the door. Ferner calls to her, 'Kerryn, you will make someone slip!'	Children may not understand what has occurred and become scared or confused.

Process	Characteristic	Example	Effects you might notice
Irreversibility	The child is unable to see that a process can be undone or reversed.	Fleur is building with blocks. She has made a tower and roads with fences along the side. Atticus is playing nearby and bumps the fence, causing two blocks to fall. Fleur begins crying uncontrollably and starts to get angry at Atticus. The educator talks with Fleur about how they can repair the fence. She explains that they can put the two blocks back in place. Fleur remains upset, saying, 'It is all broken now!'	Children may react strongly as they think something is irreversible or cannot be fixed or resolved.
Single classification	The child can only sort an object based on one characteristic.	The educator asks Bert to sort the items that are red into one tub and the items that are yellow into another. Bert finds all of the red items and all of the yellow items and sorts them. Later the educator asks Bert to sort the red squares into one tub and the yellow triangles into another. Bert struggles with this activity as he is required to look at each object in two ways at once.	Children may value an object or activity based on one category, rather than seeing other values.

Process	Characteristic	Example	Effects you might notice
Either/or thinking	The child is only able to see events one way or another; the child cannot understand that there may be an answer in the middle of these two ideas.	Daniel is playing with Dorothy at a non-competitive board game. When Dorothy completes the game, Daniel becomes angry. He says, 'I hate losing!' The educator explains to Daniel that he hasn't lost; it is a fun game and Dorothy just finished first, but Daniel holds his understanding that you either win or lose in any game.	Children may not be able to view things from alternative perspectives or be able to resolve issues fairly.
Over-generalising	The child links things they know to all situations of that kind.	Daria has a sister that is often unwell and spends a lot of time in hospital. An educator mentions that her sister is visiting on the weekend and Daria asks, 'Is she coming home from hospital?'	Children may preconceive situations based on prior experience, even though the new situation has many differences.
Animism	The child gives animate characteristics to inanimate things.	Sophia gets a paper cut when she turns the page on a book. She tells the educator that the book has 'bitten' her.	Children may believe that inanimate objects can control things or are the cause of an issue.

Some processes from the previous table continue into adulthood. Sometimes this is caused by strong connections formed in early childhood; other times it is due to information that has been repeated to strengthen the conclusion made (such as thinking all games are either won or lost).

Conservation

Conservation is about understanding that when an object changes shape, it is still the same in relation to number, length, liquid, mass, area, weight and volume.

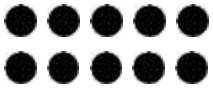
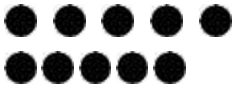
This is difficult for a preoperational child to understand due to their tendency to think illogically.

Two other abilities that link with preoperational processes are the child's:

- lack of understanding of the concepts of number, colour, shape and size
- inability to conserve in relation to number, length, liquid, mass, area, weight and volume.

These limitations are important to consider when developing programs for children and establishing appropriate expectations.

Indications that a child is unable to conserve can be gained from the way materials are presented. The following table includes examples of how preoperational children view transformed materials differently to the original materials – even though only the appearance has changed. Even if the change in appearance occurs while the child is watching, they will still think the quantities have adjusted due to the different appearance.

Conservation task question	Original presentation	Child's response	Transformation (change only made to the appearance)	Child's response
Number: Is there the same number of dots in each row?		Yes		No, the top row has more.
Length: Are the sticks the same length?		Yes		No, one is longer.
Mass: Is there the same amount of clay in each ball?		Yes		No, one has more.
Area: Are each of these shapes the same size?		Yes		No, one is larger.
Weight: Do each of these balls of clay weigh the same amount?		Yes		No, one weighs more.
Volume: Do the glasses have the same amount of liquid?		Yes		No, one has more.

There are many day-to-day implications for children and educators arising from these conservation ideas. In particular, children in the preoperational stage may have difficulty understanding why they have different materials or equipment to others.

Example

Conservation of value

Tahlia, four and a half years, has five one-dollar coins. You offer her a five-dollar note in exchange. She does not accept this. She says, 'Five coins equal more than one note!'

Being in the preoperational stage means Tahlia sees the quantity of coins as 'more' and disregards the monetary value, despite the note being of equal value.

Even when you offer her a 10-dollar note in exchange for five coins, Tahlia continues to value the coins by number rather than value.

Concrete and formal operational stages

During later stages, a child's thinking becomes close to that of an adult, although they may still require real examples of information to help them apply logic.

In the concrete operational stage, from approximately seven to 11 years, children are flexible, organised and logical, and have an understanding of conservation and other concepts that preoperational children don't.

The formal operational stage is entered during adolescence. The child finds it easier to make rational judgments with or without concrete information.

Example

Overlap of cognitive stages

When Ted says his drink of water is smaller than Nina's, Nina (five years) explains to him that it is his cup that is different and he still has the same amount of water. Later, Nina is playing and tells Lana, an educator, that the bike is 'naughty' as it hurts her leg.

Nina displays concrete operational skills in her explanations about the cup to Ted. She displays preoperational skills in her bike comment.

Despite being in the preoperational stage, Nina shows cognitive characteristics that indicate she is progressing into the concrete operational stage.

Constructivist theory in practice

In order to apply constructivist theory, you need to understand how it influences development.

The following table describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How constructivist theory influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	➢ The child has a potential for learning that is influenced by their feelings of independence and autonomy. The child should be encouraged to be an independent thinker.
Separation and stranger anxiety	➢ Children develop object permanence, which allows them to understand that people and things exist when not seen. ➢ Children develop memory skills so they are able to remember people and things, and know if these are familiar or not. ➢ Separation and stranger anxiety are likely to occur between eight months and two years. ➢ Be prepared with strategies for managing separation and stranger anxiety as part of a child's normal development.
Problem-solving	➢ Encourage children to think about the activities and experiences provided, and support children socially and emotionally. ➢ A child in the preoperational stage is exploring the environment in a variety of ways. They use both logical and illogical thinking to understand what they explore. At times, their thought processes enable them to see issues clearly; other times they are confused or misdirected by their reasoning.
Attention span	➢ Attention span formation is important to constructivist learning as thinking, problem-solving and exploration each need the child to focus and use learnt strategies. ➢ In the sensorimotor stage, attention is achieved through interest and exploration. The child requires time to use their senses, and support to explore materials more than once. ➢ In the preoperational stage, imagination and symbolic thought have emerged, which allow the child to use thought as part of the activity or as the activity itself.
Exploring and experimenting	➢ A child in the sensorimotor stage is led strongly by the need to explore using the senses. There are many ideas they have not yet tried or experienced, so introducing age-appropriate ideas is vital. ➢ A child in the preoperational stage uses both logical and illogical thought to understand what they explore. They are inspired by curiosity and explore many areas, so are able to identify a number of strong interests that shape their personality.

Development	How constructivist theory influences practice
Consequences and feelings	➤ The sensorimotor child has an understanding of what is immediate in their environment. They are not able to make informed choices or express considered ideas. They may be confused by natural consequences. This shows that the child should be provided with support and be assisted in situations where consequences may occur to ensure appropriate connections are made. ➤ The preoperational child demonstrates that logic is not always understood clearly. The child's choices, actions and ideas may evolve from this lack of logic, so natural consequences may either be unexpected or linked incorrectly. ➤ The preoperational child is able to make informed choices and actions and their ideas can be considered. This shows that the child should be supported in considering natural and logical consequences and developing critical thinking skills.
Using mistakes to learn	➤ Young children often have illogical explanations of how things happen. This may cause a child to refuse to take responsibility for their actions if they are not clear in their understanding of the situation. For example, they may fear it is worse than it really is. This difficulty with logic may lead to a child taking responsibility for something that is not related to them in a situation where they are upset.

Multiple intelligences

Howard Gardner developed a theory of multiple intelligences that attempts to capture the full range of abilities and talents.

The theory involves a set of nine different strengths (intelligences) that apply to a child's development. Gardner suggests that people have more than one intellectual capacity, and possess many intelligences that rarely operate independently. While one person may be particularly knowledgeable in a single area, such as language, they can also possess a range of abilities in other areas. The theory suggests that all nine intelligences are needed to function productively.

This provides a basis for developing programs and experiences that suit the child's ability to learn, understand and express themselves in particular learning areas. This allows you to provide learning and support methods that focus on the child's strengths and learning styles. This in turn acknowledges each child's ability to learn and provides them with the best opportunity for development.

The nine strengths/intelligences are outlined in the following table.

Strength/intelligence	Focus
Verbal-linguistic intelligence	Language and words
Logical-mathematical intelligence	Numbers, logic and reasoning
Spatial-visual intelligence	Pictures and diagrams
Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence	Movements of the body and objects
Musical intelligence	Music, rhythm and pitch
Interpersonal intelligence	People, moods, desires and motivations
Intrapersonal intelligence	Understanding the self
Naturalist intelligence	Plants, animals and nature in general
Existential intelligence	Philosophical, questioning life and how and why we exist

The following table describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How multiple intelligence theory influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	The child may demonstrate independence and self-help skills in areas that best match their type of intelligence.
Attention span	Attention span can be developed by approaching interests and skills via the appropriate intelligence. The child will respond more readily and continue the activity with more interest.
Exploring and experimenting	When children are approached with their intelligence in mind, they will be better able to develop knowledge, extend skills and develop their interests.
Problem-solving	When children are approached with their intelligence in mind, they are able to explore, understand and solve problems using this strength. The same outcome can be achieved using all intelligences as building blocks.

Examples

Applying the theory of multiple intelligences

Example 1: Applying the theory with individual children

Gordon demonstrates that he learns best through spatial intelligence. Elise, the educator, wishes to extend his ability in construction, so she:

- provides pictures of buildings or construction experiences
- finds a house plan and talks about it with Gordon.

Rachelle demonstrates that she learns best through linguistic intelligence. To extend her abilities in construction, Elise:

- talks about books on a range of topics
- discusses ideas and materials with Rachelle.

Example 2: Applying the theory with a group of children

Molly, an educator, knows that the group is interested in insects. She develops a list of experiences she can use with the children to extend on their interest and aid the learning of every child by catering for different kinds of intelligences. She thinks that she might be able to find out more information about each child's strengths by seeing how they react to each of the experiences.

Strength	Suitable learning experience
Verbal-linguistic intelligence	- Using books relating to insects - Discussing insect information
Logical-mathematical intelligence	- Working out how insects eat and what they eat by watching them - Counting how many legs insects have
Spatial-visual intelligence	- Looking at pictures of insect species
Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence	- Moving like particular insects - Touching the insects and finding out what they feel like
Musical intelligence	- Singing songs about insects
Interpersonal intelligence	- Asking others what they know about insects
Intrapersonal intelligence	- Discussing what the child already knows about insects - Finding out how the child feels about insects
Naturalist intelligence	- Finding out where insects live in nature - Exploring and finding insects in the garden
Existential intelligence	- Talking about an insect's lifecycle - Discussing why they live in particular habitats

Milestones of cognitive development

Cognitive development is characterised by a number of milestones.

The following tables illustrates some of the key milestones of cognitive development for each age group. These milestones have been sourced from ACECQA's publication *Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards*. You can access this document here: aspirelr.link/developmental-milestones-eylf.

Age	Cognitive development milestone
0–4 months	➢ Imitates facial gestures ➢ Explores the world with their hands and mouth ➢ Repeats actions, but not sure they are causing them
4–8 months	➢ Repeats accidental actions ➢ Enjoys games such as peek-a-boo ➢ Looks, hears and touches ➢ Searches for partially hidden objects ➢ Enjoys toys that make noises ➢ Explores by touching, looking and mouthing
8–12 months	➢ Repeats actions such as dropping a toy then dropping it again if it is handed back ➢ Smiles at image in the mirror ➢ Notices differences ➢ Shows surprise
1–2 years	➢ Repeats actions that lead to interesting results, such as banging objects ➢ Points to and names objects ➢ Knows some body parts ➢ Recognises self in mirror ➢ Pretends to do household chores such as sweeping the floor ➢ Explores objects by mouthing, shaking and banging them ➢ Stacks and knocks over items ➢ Calls self by name, 'I', 'mine' ➢ Searches for hidden toys
2–3 years	➢ Builds a tower of five to seven objects ➢ Lines up objects ➢ Recognises objects in pictures ➢ Explores sand, water and play dough ➢ Uses symbolic play such as using a block for a car ➢ Begins to count ➢ Recognises similarities and differences ➢ Pretends to be an animal ➢ Can follow two or more directions

Age	Cognitive development milestone
3–5 years	➤ Understands opposites ➤ Builds and constructs with understanding of balance and angles ➤ Counts five to ten things ➤ Talks to self when playing ➤ Names and matches some colours ➤ Follows instructions and rules ➤ Able to recall stories and events ➤ Can recognise and write some letters and numbers

Practice Task 6

1. Which of the following are milestones of cognitive development that you would expect children to achieve by the age of three? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Begins to count
- ☐ Repeats actions, but not sure they are causing them
- ☐ Searches for hidden toys as part of their development toward object permanence
- ☐ Goes to the toilet independently
- ☐ Explores objects by mouthing, shaking and banging them

2. Which of the following are milestones of cognitive development that you would expect children aged three to five years to achieve? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Understands opposites
- ☐ Counts five to ten objects
- ☐ Follows instructions and rules
- ☐ Can write first and last name independently
- ☐ Has at least three close friends

3. Describe how one contextual factor can influence cognitive development.

4. Draw a line to match the aspect of cognitive development theory and research to the way it influences educator development.

* Multiple intelligences theory explores the abilities and talents.	* Educators become aware that from birth to approximately two years, a child uses physical actions to explore with their senses.
* The sensorimotor stage is the first stage of cognitive development.	* Educators understand that it is difficult for preschool children to understand some concepts as they tend to think illogically.
* Conservation is about understanding that when an object changes shape, it is still the same.	* Educators realise that children learn through exploration and the use of their imagination.
* The preoperational stage spans from approximately two to seven years.	* Educators understand that children are individual and they each express themselves and understand information using different strengths.

2C Communication development

Using communication that is meaningful to children helps them to participate, learn and share important skills and knowledge.

A child's language development begins from the moment they are born, with newborns making noises and attempting to communicate. Because these basic language skills are fostered and developed into speech and more comprehensive language skills over the first few years of their lives, children need activities and experiences that assist this transition from an early age. The language skills children learn at this time form the basis for the advanced skills they will develop later in life.

Practising language skills is important for communication development.

EYLF Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators, shows that development of communication skills influences many areas of learning, including a child's ability to feel a sense of belonging.

Holistic view of communication development

Communication development links closely with learning in other areas.

For example:

- Communication requires fine motor skills, including tongue and mouth coordination, as well as body language.
- Communication requires gross motor skills, including body language.
- Communication requires emotional and psychological development, including the ability to express feelings and thoughts through verbal communication.
- Communication requires social development, including interaction with peers and others, expressing needs and using prosocial skills.
- Communication requires cognitive development, including symbolic understanding and memory, which allows children to develop language.
- Communication requires creative development, including self-expression.

Theories help you to understand children's individual needs. Communication development links with most holistic and cognitive theories, as described in the following table.

Nature versus nurture	The following examples define nature and nurture characteristics in relation to communication: ➤ Mansa is two years old. He has two older sisters. When Mansa wants something, he points and grunts, and his sisters run to get him the item. Although Mansa can say words expected for his age, he is able to communicate effectively without these words. ➤ Arquelle is two years old and is an only child. Her mother speaks to her all day and, when Arquelle wants something, her mother does not give it to her unless she tries to say the words. Her mother helps her by repeating information, e.g. 'Arquelle, say "cup".' Arquelle's spoken language development meets the milestones of her age.
Brain development	Theorists studying brain development have found that it has an enormous impact on how a child learns. Heredity (nature) defines the framework of a brain, but the environment (nurture) has a huge effect on the depth of development. Brain development has a direct relationship to language skill development.
Sociocultural theory	The sociocultural theory includes learning that is acquired through social interaction and scaffolding emerging skills. If children are exposed to new experiences requiring a higher skill level, they are encouraged to move forward themselves and attempt to learn these skills. An example of scaffolding in relation to communication development is a toddler who is learning new words. The toddler may listen to older children speaking and labelling objects, and hear how they express themselves in different ways.
Behaviourist theory	Behaviourist theory recognises that when children receive positive reinforcement for skills they have demonstrated, they will work to increase those skills. The following example shows how the theory applies to language development: Brit is six months old. When she babbles, her mother returns her sounds. This encourages Brit to continue making sounds. Communication occurs between mother and daughter.
Constructivist theory	A child in the sensorimotor stage begins using reflexive sounds and progresses to a stage where they can use language to represent items. To be able to label items, the child first must understand what the item is. For example: 1. The child plays with an object. 2. The child develops an understanding of the properties of the object. 3. The child hears others calling the object a ball. 4. The child begins to call the object a ball. Communication in the preoperational stage develops fast as the child is able to pick up symbolic understanding quickly, interpret more abstract ideas and label these with language. Children in the concrete operational stage enjoy developing more complex language patterns and understanding. They participate in conversations and use the rules required to communicate their feelings, ideas and thoughts.

Multiple intelligences	If you use a child's strength, you can provide learning and support methods, and approaches that focus on this child's learning style. For example: › Sol has bodily kinaesthetic intelligence. He uses a lot of body language and expresses himself by showing others through his actions. › When Michelle is happy, she sings happy tunes. When she is sad, she hums in a low tone. She demonstrates musical intelligence to communicate her feelings. › Ted watches others communicate and uses facial expressions and active listening. His strongest intelligence is interpersonal. › Children who have linguistic intelligence as their strength: – are more sensitive to spoken and written language – have a greater ability to learn new languages – can use language to accomplish goals – express themselves using language – use language to remember.

Communication development influences

Communication development is influenced by a range of factors.

These factors, and their influence on communication development, are outlined in the following table.

Factor	Influence on communication development
Age/stage of development	Children progress through language stages sequentially.
Gender	Girls generally use communication more than boys. They commonly use language to communicate with each other and play out nurturing roles, this often draws them to experiences which involve the use of various forms of language and relationships.
Family background, beliefs and cultural practices	Families communicate differently and family dynamics contribute toward the child's use of communication and their ability to communicate. The languages families use may influence development as some children may be expected to use verbal, non-verbal or sign language. 'Baby talk' and key words that are specifically used by the family, may also influence the child's ability to be understood by others.
Ability	Genetic ability and the environment influence children's skills; however, some limitations may occur due to developmental challenges. Some children may have a naturally higher ability to use language than others.
Temperament	Children with particular temperaments may prefer to participate in activities that require less communication than other activities. Some children take more time than others to become involved.

Factor	Influence on communication development
Interests	Some children are genuinely drawn to activities that involve discussion and listening. Some children notice changes in language and new words, while others utilise specific language concepts regularly.
Peer groups	Peers learn from each other in play as information is shared and play occurs. Children may add their own language to the play environment, asking questions and relating their understanding to others.

Communication definitions

Communication skills include the use of speech and language.

Speech includes the ability to produce sounds and words; language relates to the words that you use and understand.

You are likely to come into contact with many different languages, including international languages and non-verbal languages such as Auslan or Key Word Sign. You may also become familiar with made-up terms that have meaning only to a particular person or family.

To understand language more clearly, become familiar with the following key terms related to language and communication.

Term	Meaning
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
EAL	English as an additional language
NESB	Non-English-speaking background
Language	Communication, whether spoken or non-verbal, and the particular words and meaning related to a community or country
Literacy	Ability to read and write
Pre-language communication	Cues or sounds that are used by an infant (for example, cooing, crying and grunting), to which adults may attach meaning
First words	A child's first word is usually defined as one that sounds like an adult word and is used consistently in similar situations; this usually occurs late in the first year and accompanies gestures that enable communication; for example, waving goodbye when asked
Holophrase	A single word that stands in for a complete sentence; for example, saying 'drink' instead of 'I would like a drink'
Telegraphic speech	Two or more words used together in a meaningful sentence with small words, such as 'a', 'to' and 'the' left out; for example, 'Go sleep car'
Sentence	A set of words that forms a complete statement; by three years of age, most children can form sentences of three or more words
Syntax	The rules by which we organise words into sentences

Term	Meaning
Morphology	The application of markers that denote number, tense, case, person, gender, active and passive voice; that is, the –s and –ed endings in English words
Pronunciation	The sounds of speech
Semantics	The meaning of words
Standard Australian English	The spoken and written English language used in Australia; this includes pronunciation and accents, as well as particular words commonly used in Australia
Over-generalisations	Applying the rules of grammar consistently, but incorrectly; for example, applying 's' for plurals ('Look at the sheeps') and 'ed' for past tense ('I goed to the shop')
Parentese/ motherese or child-directed speech	How we modify our speech to suit the child's development using shorter, simpler sentences, more repetition, careful articulation, slow speech, basing talk around a child's interest and expanding on telegraphic speech
Phonology	How we understand and produce speech sounds
Pragmatics	How we engage in communication with each other, take turns to speak, maintain a topic of conversation, communicate clearly, and use gestures and tone of voice
Questions	Questions are complex forms that involve reordering a sentence and using tone to express a query; 'what' and 'where' questions are usually asked first, 'why' and 'when' follow and it is not until well into the preschool years that children competently use 'can't' and 'don't' questions
Closed questions	Questions that can be answered with a yes or no
Open-ended questions	Questions that must be answered with information; for example, 'What did you do at school today?'

Nativist theory

Noam Chomsky's nativist theory is that children's language development is instinctive and present from the moment they are born.

Chomsky calls it the 'language acquisition device'. This is not a real device, but is a child's inbuilt ability to understand basic language skills that develop into speech and more comprehensive language skills over the first few years of their life.

The nativist theory is supported closely by the nature and nurture theory as well as brain development theory.

Milestones of communication development

Like cognitive development, communication development is characterised by a number of milestones.

Some of the most common communication and language development milestones are provided in the following table.

Age	Communication and language development milestones
0–3 months	➢ Makes a variety of different noises to capture adults' attention. ➢ Interested in the rhythm and tones of stories, poems, music and songs. ➢ Reacts to loud noises. ➢ Moves their head towards different sounds. ➢ Coos back and forth with a caregiver.
3–6 months	➢ Begins to develop a purpose for each noise. ➢ Expresses emotion through laughing, squealing and crying. ➢ Begins to make sounds/babble. ➢ Responds to different tones in the voices around them. ➢ Looks at and hold books that are within their reach. ➢ Responds to their own name. ➢ Gives and receives communication. ➢ Imitates and responds to someone speaking.
6–12 months	➢ Communicates mostly by crying, cooing, babbling, imitating, and using facial expressions, body language and gestures. ➢ Responds to simple verbal requests. ➢ Understands that words relate to objects. ➢ Begins to imitate spoken words. ➢ First words may be spoken, usually 'Mama' or 'Dada'. ➢ Understands the meaning of simple, common words such as 'bye', 'stop', 'car', 'bottle' and 'dummy'. ➢ Responds to their name by turning their head. ➢ Sits and looks at books while you read, pointing to pages, words and pictures, and trying to turn the pages. ➢ Understands simple instructions, especially if accompanied by cues or physical directions. ➢ Enjoys books or poems that have repetitive sections or rhythmic wording.
1–2 years	➢ Uses combinations of words in meaningful ways. ➢ Identifies names of people and familiar objects. ➢ Has a vocabulary of up to 200 words. ➢ Has a short attention span. ➢ Loves repetition. ➢ Begins to show interest in books that focus on their personal interests. ➢ Begins to repeat and mimic your language.
2–3 years	➢ Displays interest in word rhymes. ➢ Understands verbal prepositions, such as 'under' and 'on'. ➢ Has a vocabulary of up to 1,000 words. ➢ Understands many things said by adults. ➢ Begins asking 'Why?' and 'What?' questions. ➢ Increases vocabulary on a daily basis.

Age	Communication and language development milestones
3–5 years	➤ Has clear speech with only a few grammatical errors. ➤ Has more complex speech patterns and vocabulary. ➤ Asks challenging questions. ➤ Tells stories and recalls past events. ➤ Understands advanced concepts, such as 'same' and 'different'. ➤ May be capable of reciting their name and address. ➤ Understands language; however, it is common for them to make errors with their pronunciation and sentence structure; for example, 'I drinked some milk'. ➤ Has a longer attention span. ➤ Shows interest in stories as well as informative text. ➤ Enjoys stories that help them deal with emotions, feelings or situations. ➤ Able to memorise, recite and read stories aloud.

A document that summarises developmental milestones with links to the EYLF is available at: aspirelr.link/developmental-milestones-eylf.

Practice Task 7

1. Which of the following milestones of communication development would you expect children to achieve by the age of three? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Moves their head towards different sounds and reacts to loud noises.
- ☐ Responds to their own name, imitates and responds to someone speaking.
- ☐ Speaks in clear sentences.
- ☐ Able to memorise, recite and read stories aloud.
- ☐ Asks 'Why' questions.

2. Which of the following milestones of cognitive development would you expect children aged three to five years to achieve? Select all that apply.

- ☐ First words may be spoken.
- ☐ Coos back and forth with caregiver.
- ☐ Tells stories and recalls past events.
- ☐ Uses complex speech patterns.
- ☐ Asks challenging questions.

3. Describe how one contextual factor can influence communication development.

2D Emotional development

An understanding of theories relating to emotional development enables you to know more about individual children and their emotional needs.

Although emotional and social development are closely linked, social development is about relationships and interactions with others, whereas emotional development focuses on how someone feels and how they deal with and express these feelings.

Psychological development relates to a person's mental health and wellbeing. For resources to support children's psychological development, go to aspirelr.link/be-you.

Emotional development is about a child understanding the emotions of themselves and others.

Emotional development is influenced by a range of theories including those that are holistic, such as the following:

- Temperament and personality determine the ease in which different children feel secure and cared for.
- Ecological approach shows how the child's world affects their experiences of life and whether they are provided love, affection, security and safety.
- Humanistic approach shows how the interactions, support, security and safety provided to a child affect their ability to become all they can be. Without a positive self-image and self-esteem, this is unachievable.
- Social learning theory indicates that self-esteem is a central influence and suggests that self-regulation (controlling one's own behaviour) is combined with modelling and behaviour reinforcement to influence someone's personality and how they behave.
- Sociocultural theory demonstrates how the environment and other people support a child through scaffolding to learn new skills, assisting the child to become independent and capable.
- Behaviourist theory states that reward and punishment shape the child and provide them with either a positive or negative impression of themselves.

Emotional development influences

Each child is unique. Their environment and personal characteristics influence their emotional development.

A range of influences are commonly identified, including the factors outlined in the following table.

Factor	Influence on emotional development
Age	Older children can understand and control their feelings more readily. They may be able to label these feelings and to self-regulate, or control their feelings independently.

Factor	Influence on emotional development
Gender	Different emotional reactions may be expected for males and females; for example, some believe that females may demonstrate emotions openly while males should keep their feelings private.
Family background, lifestyle and culture	Families have unique values, which may place expectations on children's expression and understanding. Some cultures have different emotional expectations. This might be a general expectation that emotions are shown, or not shown, at particular times. Some norms influence how people demonstrate emotions; for example, there may be different expectations following a death or serious incident, such as hiding feelings or expressing grief loudly.
Abilities	Some challenges or barriers affect emotional responses. For example, autism spectrum disorder is known to interfere with a child's ability to understand, express and regulate emotion, including having difficulty understanding the feelings, reactions and cues of others.
Level of egocentrism	Children may either respond to the emotions of others or ignore them. They may be overprotective. They may be unsupportive due to their lack of ability to look beyond their own needs.
Temperament	Children with slow to warm up and difficult temperaments may be overly emotional or demonstrate a higher level of emotion. They may appear to be in a negative emotional state more often than children with other temperaments. Children with more even temperaments may not appear to react emotionally when faced with challenges.
Peer groups	Children who relate well to other children enjoy a greater level of positive emotions. They may enjoy a number of learning experiences as they relate to others who manage emotions, and learn how these occur and affect people.
Belonging	When a child is attached to people that provide security and safety, they are able to explore their environments knowing that they will be cared for and protected from harm. They will feel comfort in knowing that when they require support and attention that it will be provided to them in ways that suit their individual personality and relationship needs.

Psychosocial theory

Erik Erikson provides a theory of development that describes stages from birth to death.

Erikson's theory suggests that:

- people have the same basic needs
- personalities develop and change in response to how these needs are met throughout life
- development proceeds in stages that match biological lifespan changes.

The psychosocial theory can be presented in stages, as shown in the following table. Each stage has a conflict based on life experience that is resolved either positively or negatively. This determines how positively or negatively the next stage can be managed.

Age/crisis	Details	Your role
Infants: Trust vs mistrust The infant is developing a sense of drive and hope in others.	The growing trust between the infant and caregivers is part of their healthy emotional development. Infants are helpless, use cues to express their needs and rely on caregivers to understand and respond to these cues appropriately. If the infant's needs are not met or their cues are not acknowledged, they develop a lack of trust in those around them and do not develop the ability to make things happen, lowering their self-esteem. An infant who cries is doing so for a reason, such as pain, hunger, a soiled nappy or being too hot or too cold. The child's temperament may also affect their needs. This stage results in the child either trusting or mistrusting others. The outcome determines how positively or negatively the child moves into the next emotional crisis. A child without trust may be wary and hostile as they will try to protect themselves from an unpredictable world.	Spend as much one-on-one time with each infant as possible. Respond to crying and other cues immediately to help establish trust.

Age/crisis	Details	Your role
Toddlers: Autonomy vs doubt The toddler is developing a sense of self-control, courage and will.	The toddlers need for autonomy (independence) is shown in their reactions. At this time children: › become more assertive › wish to have control over their environment › regularly use the word 'no'. This can be a challenging time for families and educators as they may feel toddlers are being uncooperative. However, this is a normal stage of development that can be managed in a positive manner. Toddlers experience egocentrism, where they are only able to understand their own needs. They find it difficult to share and take turns. Frustration, difficulty in sharing and tantrums may be common. Between 18 months and three years, children are exploring more and can easily become overwhelmed. Tantrums result mainly from the mismatch between what a child would like to do or thinks they can do, and the realities of their skills, the needs of others, the environment and the expectations, safety and health concerns imposed on them. When the toddler crisis is complete, the child will either show autonomy or demonstrate feelings of doubt in themselves. This outcome determines how positively or negatively the child will move into the next emotional crisis.	Only give toddlers choices when appropriate and realistic, and where the choice allows the toddler to feel in control. Choices, such as whether they would like milk or water to drink, provide independence but do not threaten their safety. Be careful of asking, 'Would you like to…?' when you are giving an instruction, such as wearing their hats outside. Many educators are puzzled by a child's non-compliance with an instruction, failing to recognise that they questioned the child and gave them the opportunity to choose. Encourage toddlers to attempt new skills with support so you can intervene if frustration is apparent or if safety is a concern. Allow time for the toddler to complete a task for themselves rather than doing it for them. To minimise tantrums: › allow children to make realistic choices throughout the day › ensure children have their physical needs met, are well rested and have had adequate food and drink › re-direct children to areas of interest to prevent tantrums from escalating › incorporate stories and songs about feelings to help children identify their emotions › have multiples of popular equipment to avoid conflicts › stay calm, as this reassures the child that they are safe.

Age/crisis	Details	Your role
Preschoolers: Initiative vs guilt The preschooler is developing a sense of purpose.	Initiative refers to the ability to take on new tasks and complete these with energy and enthusiasm. This skill emerges at preschool age. If a preschooler has learnt that they can trust the world and they have a strong sense of autonomy, they will also have a lot of ideas, energy and enthusiasm to explore the world. However, preschoolers do not always have a wide knowledge of how to achieve their ideas. They are learning to negotiate and solve problems, so they still need adult support. When the preschool crisis is complete, the child will either demonstrate initiative or show feelings of guilt in having their needs met or taking control of their needs. The outcome determines how positively or negatively the child will move into the next emotional crisis.	The environment and the questions you ask, aid children to become more independent by providing opportunities for decision-making. Decision-making skills help promote positive behaviour as children choose what they want to do themselves. Encourage children to make decisions when appropriate; for example, what experience to participate in, whether they would like more to eat or drink, or how they might set up an experience. Adults must make decisions about safety, such as whether to wear a hat outside or take medication.

As this theory relates to a person's whole life, you should be aware of the other stages Erikson predicts, as outlined in the following table. In some situations, you may identify a preschooler entering the industry vs inferiority crisis stage.

Age/crisis	Explanation
School-age: Industry vs inferiority The school-age child is developing a sense of method and competence.	School-age children are developing industry, which means they are learning to apply skills and work effectively with others. If they are not supported to become industrious or if their efforts are given little or negative feedback, they will develop a sense of inferiority.
Adolescent: Identity vs role confusion The adolescent is developing a sense of devotion and fidelity.	The adolescent is attempting to find out who they are as an individual. Peer relationships feature greatly here. Until this stage, psychosocial development is largely related to what is done to the child. Now development relates to the choices an individual makes.
Young adulthood: Intimacy vs isolation The person in young adulthood is developing a sense of affiliation and love.	Mutually satisfying relationships are sought and families are started in the search for companionship and love. Distance from others occurs if the person has negative experiences at this stage.

Age/crisis	Explanation
Middle adulthood: Generativity vs self-absorption and stagnation The person in middle adulthood is developing a sense of production and ability to care for others.	In middle adulthood, the adult often takes a leadership role at work or at home as a parent. As a leader, the person sets examples and defines the culture and expectations of their family. As children leave home, or relationship goals change, a mid-life crisis may occur in an effort to find new purpose and goals.
Late adulthood: Integrity vs despair The person in late adulthood is developing a sense of wisdom.	In late adulthood, the purpose is to look back on life and feel a sense of integrity. At this time people develop a sense of completion and acceptance of death. For those who do not feel integrity and feel a lack of achievement in their life, despair can occur.

It is always possible to return to a particular stage and progress through again in a positive manner.

Example

Experiencing emotional growth later in life

Andrea had a difficult childhood, being raised by parents who were unable to meet her needs. As a result, she felt inferior and did not trust others, doubted her own abilities, felt guilty about asking others for help and was unable to participate fully in many activities. Andrea did not have a strong sense of identity.

In her early twenties, Andrea met someone she cared for deeply. She learnt from this person that trust was possible, as this person was consistent and considered her needs. This positive experience of trust (trust vs mistrust) helped Andrea feel more confident in her own ability to achieve things (autonomy vs doubt), including confidence in meeting the other person's needs. As her confidence developed, she felt less guilt (initiative vs guilt) as she could see she was able to contribute to situations and this made her feel less inferior (industry vs inferiority). Andrea began to find out what she really wanted to achieve in her life and this gave her a sense of self (identity vs role confusion). She was able to develop new life goals and make strong healthy relationships (intimacy vs isolation).

Psychosocial theory in practice

To effectively apply psychosocial theory, you need to understand how it influences development.

The following information describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How psychosocial theory influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	➤ The crises in this theory link with a child's thoughts about themselves and how they view their environment. These views influence the child's ability to see themselves as capable beings. This in turn influences the things they try and the level of effort they apply to succeed.
Separation and stranger anxiety	➤ Trust is a basic need of children if they are to develop positively in early childhood. ➤ Children who do not trust others will feel greater fear and anxiety when faced with new situations and people. ➤ The development of autonomy and initiative relies on the child's ability to trust others and the environment. ➤ Ensure those close to the child tell them when they are leaving so the child is not confused or looking for them. ➤ Explain what is happening to children so they are not fearful or confused. ➤ Create a stable, consistent and predictable routine and environment.
Using mistakes to learn	➤ A child who trusts others, feels confident and independent, and demonstrates initiative, should have no trouble taking responsibility for their actions. This is part of their positive development. ➤ If the child is mistrusting, doubts their own abilities and feels guilt easily, they will be more likely to hide or avoid taking any responsibility for their actions – not because they are deceptive, but because they fear the outcome.

Attachment theory

Children who are securely attached usually experience less distress than other children.

John Bowlby developed the attachment theory and Mary Ainsworth continued studies based on his findings. Bowlby believed that children and infants are able to form attachments with a number of people; the attachment with a primary caregiver (usually a parent or guardian) is strongest, then any number of other attachments may follow.

Other attachments are equally as important to the child's social and emotional development. As each child commences education and care, your goal is to develop an attachment relationship.

Children show attachment relationships by demonstrating the following characteristics in their behaviour.

Characteristic	Behaviour
Social referencing	Social referencing is when a child watches the emotional responses and responds in a similar way to a person they are attached to. For example, if a spider or bug is crawling on the wall, the child may copy the response of the person. If the person screams, the child will scream; if the person says, 'Hey, look how many legs it has! How interesting!' the child will show interest.
Proximity maintenance/ anchoring	Anchoring is when a child moves off to explore, but not too far from the person they are attached to. The child makes sure the person is within close proximity and may be confused and concerned if the person moves away unexpectedly. In practice this shows the importance of an attached person saying goodbye to a child when they are leaving.
Safe haven/secure base/refuelling	Refuelling is when a child periodically returns to the person they are attached to with a toy or activity, or just to make sure they are still there. The child also returns to the person if frightened, hurt or upset.

Bowlby identified the following attachment characteristics in children.

Secure attachment characteristics	➢ Develops independence and autonomy ➢ Able to separate from the attachment figure ➢ Seeks comfort from the attachment figure if hurt or frightened ➢ Demonstrates a positive response when the attachment figure returns ➢ Prefers the attachment figure to a stranger ➢ Has trusting, lasting relationships ➢ Has a high self-esteem ➢ Able to share feelings with others ➢ Seeks social support
Ambivalent attachment characteristics	➢ Wary of strangers ➢ Becomes greatly distressed when the attachment figure leaves ➢ Does not appear to be comforted when the attachment figure returns ➢ Struggles to develop independence and autonomy ➢ Reluctant to develop close relationships ➢ Becomes overly distressed when a relationship ends ➢ Dependent on others to meet their emotional needs

Avoidant attachment characteristics	➤ May avoid the person they are most attached to ➤ Does not seek much comfort from the person they are most attached to ➤ Shows little or no preference between the person they are most attached to and a stranger ➤ Independence and autonomy developed as a coping mechanism ➤ May have intimacy problems ➤ Does not share emotions in social relationships ➤ Unable or unwilling to share feelings with others ➤ Resistant rather than independent
Disorganised attachment characteristics	➤ Shows a mixture of avoidant and resistant behaviours ➤ May appear dazed, confused or apprehensive ➤ Independence and autonomy difficult to develop ➤ May take on a parenting role, such as the role of parent to their educator ➤ Becomes dependent on others rather than independent

Separation and stranger anxiety

Many children experience anxiety when separated from their parent or primary caregiver, or when being introduced to a new person.

Common signs of separation and stranger anxiety include:

- withdrawal
- clinginess
- lack of eye contact
- sleeping difficulties
- unusual quietness
- aggression
- crying
- other behaviour that is out of character.

Some children become very clingy and withdrawn when introduced to strangers.

Attachment theory in practice

When a child displays signs of anxiety, the strategies to settle them are very similar to those for reacting to any emotional upset.

You can use strategies such as:

- physically comforting the child with a hug or a rub on the back, arm or shoulder
- talking to the child
- providing comforters to relax the child, such as a special blanket, toy or dummy
- redirecting or distracting the child with another activity.

You can develop strong attachments with children by using the following strategies:

- Hold infants as frequently as possible in a relaxed and comfortable way.
- Respond quickly to an infant's cries and cues to help the child feel secure.
- Provide infants with opportunities to explore the environment independently while you are nearby to encourage them to feel secure when they are away from you.
- Help children to understand the pattern of the day by telling them what is going to happen next.
- Use routines, such as dressing or undressing, for one-on-one interactions.
- Make the child feel important throughout the day.
- Talk with children if you are unable to hold or be near them. Use singing, poems and rhymes as a way to comfort children.
- Ensure that educators remain consistent. It is detrimental in building relationships and security if there are frequent educator changes.
- Work at children's eye level.

The following table provides a summary of how attachment theory may influence your practice.

Development	How attachment theory influences practice
Self-help skills and independence	• Securely attached children are more likely to feel safe to explore the world and develop independence and self-help skills.
Separation and stranger anxiety	• Children need secure attachments to feel safe in their exploration of the world. • Children are wary of people they don't know. • If children are securely attached, they will be less anxious in general. • Your interactions and plans for every child will include developing close attachment relationships. • Support children and remain close if strangers are nearby. • Use your secure attachment relationship to help children feel less fearful and develop new relationships with others.
Relationship preferences	• Children feel safest with primary caregivers. • A child is able to form secondary relationships. • The more securely attached a child is, the less likely they are to become distressed. • Issues can arise if attachments are not developed, respected and responded to.
Problem-solving	• Depending on the child's feelings of security, they may make decisions based on the availability of adults or peers. • To empower the child you should use your secure relationship to provide support that the child is confident with.
Using mistakes to learn	• A securely attached child is confident accepting responsibility as they can predict your response and feel safe in the outcome. • A child who is not securely attached may fear any outcome and may even try to hide their actions. This is common in some children when they are aggressive towards others; they may blame another child or act as if they are not involved.

Transitional objects

Winnicott's theory is that an object that gave a child comfort when in a safe environment would help reduce the child's anxiety and give comfort in strange environments.

To help create a more secure relationship between you and a child, you can use a special toy or ritual. This process is called using a transitional object and involves using something other than yourself to gain the child's interest and attention. The child will then link the toy or ritual with you and slowly become familiar and comfortable with you.

Determine what may work as a transitional object by asking the family or watching what activities the child enjoys doing. Transitional objects are often a link between the service and home. Consider the stage of development and interests that are common to children of this age and stage of development.

Example

Using a transitional object

Ally (two and a half years) is with her mother as part of an orientation program. An educator, Dave, has observed over the last two visits that Ally is fine with him talking to her mother, but gets a bit clingy if he speaks directly to her.

Ally's mum has told Dave that Ally loves animals, so Dave plans to use a transitional object on Ally's next visit to see how it assists their relationship. He allows Ally to settle in for a while with her mother, then brings over a set of toy animals. He sits nearby and starts to play with the animals. Dave makes some quiet animal noises as he plays and after a few moments, Ally comes over, sits near Dave and they play with the animals together for some time. Together they make more animals out of play dough.

The next day, Dave has the farm set up and shows Ally as soon as she arrives. He sits with her and they play with the animals together while her mother sits apart from them.

Moral theory

Lawrence Kohlberg identified seven stages of moral thinking that cover all life stages.

Children develop through the stages sequentially. The three stages that are shown in the following table relate to children up to preschool age.

Level 1: Preconventional morality		
Stage 0: Egocentric judgment	**Stage 1: Obedience and punishment**	**Stage 2: Individualism and exchange**
➤ The child makes a judgment of right or wrong based on what they want or what is helpful to them. ➤ There is no concept of rules or obligations. ➤ The child has no concept of needing to obey or conform.	➤ The child sees morality as something external to themselves. ➤ The child responds to cultural rules and labels of good, bad, right and wrong. ➤ The child sees rules as things that adults impose. ➤ The child sees physical consequences as being linked to what is good or bad. ➤ Punishment is linked with doing wrong things and the child wishes to avoid punishment.	➤ The child realises that different individuals have different viewpoints. ➤ The child sees that they need to make their own judgment about what is right or wrong. ➤ Punishment is a risk that should be avoided. ➤ Elements of fairness, reciprocity and equal sharing are present. ➤ Concepts of loyalty, gratitude and justice are not yet understood.

Moral theory in practice

The child's confidence in expressing their moral view allows you to identify areas of strength and need in relation to morality.

Expressed moral views are excellent sources for discussion and problem-solving, which enable children to learn about others and to consider what is right or wrong at their level of understanding.

Moral theory supports the following strategies for assisting children to develop moral understanding:

- Create discussion groups for children to solve different problems.
- Encourage children to be assertive.
- Foster choice.
- Include children in the development of limits and guidelines.
- Hold children accountable for their actions.
- Explain situations that occur that demonstrate right or wrong, including reasons for this.
- Provide warm, secure relationships to enable the child to distinguish the difference between good and bad feelings and actions.

- Step in when you see a moral issue about to occur and help children to understand the issue.
- Model moral behaviour.
- Be clear about your values.
- Show respect for others.
- Demonstrate and encourage good manners.
- Interact as much as possible.
- Involve children in community activities.
- Discuss celebrations, holidays and cultural events, and show respect for what they mean to others.
- Take advantage of windows of opportunity or teachable moments to guide children morally.
- Provide children with responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Provide a wide range of positive activities.

Example

Discussion about morals

During a group discussion, an educator asks the children whether they think it is right or wrong to take a toy from another child's bag if they really want it. The children come up with many ideas for why this would or wouldn't be okay. The group concludes that it would only be okay if they asked the child first and the child agreed.

This discussion gave the children an opportunity to see what others thought and to come to a final understanding of what is right and wrong in this particular situation. It also helped children understand some of the behaviour expectations that are in place.

Milestones of emotional development

It is useful to know some emotional development milestones so you can measure a child's abilities and state of mind.

These milestones must be flexible to allow for individual learning and development. The following table shows some common emotional development milestones for children of different ages.

Age	Emotional milestone
0–6 months	➤ Cries in response to another infant's cry ➤ Becomes capable of demonstrating emotions such as sadness, happiness, joy, anger and disgust
6–12 months	➤ Becomes increasingly shy with strangers ➤ Begins to demonstrate fear ➤ Separation anxiety increases
1–2 years	➤ Becomes increasingly independent ➤ Toward the latter part of this stage, separation anxiety may begin to fade
2–3 years	➤ Prefers routine; does not enjoy changes ➤ Separates from family members ➤ May be attached to a comfort toy ➤ Experiences new feelings such as guilt, shame and pride ➤ Becomes increasingly independent and exerts control by saying 'no'
3–4 years	➤ Is able to cooperate with other children more regularly ➤ Negotiates simple solutions to problems and conflicts with peers

A document that summarises developmental milestones with links to the EYLF is available at: aspirelr.link/developmental-milestones-eylf.

Practice Task 8

1. Number each emotional development milestone from 1 to 5 in the order it would be achieved.

☐ Exerts control by saying 'no'.

☐ Begins to show signs of independence.

☐ Negotiates simple solutions to problems and conflicts with peers.

☐ Becomes capable of demonstrating emotions such as sadness, happiness, joy, anger and disgust.

☐ Begins to demonstrate fear and separation anxiety may increase.

2. Describe how one contextual factor can influence emotional development.

3. Draw a line to match the aspect of emotional and psychological development theory and research to the way it influences educator development.

* Attachment theory explains that children and infants are able to form attachments with a number of people.	* Educators become aware of the stages and work to provide appropriate care and experiences so the child develops and changes in positive ways.
* Psychosocial theory suggests people face crises at different stages and they develop and change in response to whether they have positive or negative experiences.	* Educators realise the importance of working with families so they can share information, understand the child's needs and make decisions about the child in consultation.
* Moral theory describes stages of understanding.	* Educators understand that even though they explain what is right, the child may not fully understand.

2E Physical development

Needs, interests and developmental stages influence children's physical abilities.

The experiences you provide can reflect these influences and also contribute new aspects to development.

Physical development is influenced by a range of theories, including those that are holistic such as the following:

The environment (nurture) plays a part in physical development.

- Maturation theory indicates that children must grow and develop. As this happens, their abilities increase.
- Nature versus nurture identifies that while maturation (nature) plays a part in development, nurture (the environment) provides much of the learning that takes place, as well as the level of ability a child is able to achieve.
- Sociocultural theory involves scaffolding that is used to support children's emerging skills, helping them from the time they start to show an ability, until they become independent in achieving their goal.

Physical development influences

A number of factors influence children's physical development.

Contextual factors that influence individual physical development are detailed in the following table.

Factor	Influence on physical development
Age	Some areas of physical development are linked with the child's age as they relate closely with body maturation and the development of vital skills. For example, using the toilet and eating solid food. Other skills relate to the sequence of skill development. For example, a child first learns to crawl, then stand, then walk, then run. There is no exact age that links to these abilities as each child develops in a slightly different way.
Gender	Gender may influence physical development as children tend to practise skills that relate to their interests. Although children each have their own likes and dislikes, there are interests that are more common to boys than girls (for example, gross motor activities and construction). Other interests, such as dramatic play, dressing and undressing dolls, sewing and threading, are more common to girls than boys. Children practise the skills they need to complete their favoured experiences. Studies have shown that girls participate in less vigorous physical exercise than boys. This is thought to occur due to girls being more likely to be involved in social, communicative and imaginative play.

Factor	Influence on physical development
Temperament	Temperament affects the way children approach activities and people, and how involved they may be. For example: › A child who takes time to warm up to an activity may gain less practice at using materials initially, but may spend more concentrated effort at the activity once they understand it. › A child with a different temperament may have a low concentration span and participate in short spurts.
Interests	Each child has a unique way of looking at the world and will be fascinated by different things. Sometimes interests will occur based on what the child knows about the world, what their family participates in or what their friends enjoy; at other times, a child's interest will be determined by individual enjoyment. If a child's interests include physical pursuits, they will practise skills more regularly than a child who is not involved in physical activities.
Peers	Peers can influence a child's interests and encourage a child to participate in physical games and experiences that they enjoy.
Genetics	Genetics influence the rate of growth, the size of body parts and the timing of development; for example, if a child wants to learn to ride a bicycle but their legs are short, they may not be able to reach the pedals.
Environment	The experiences a child is provided with influence their ability and interests. For example, if a child has used their fine motor skills to create craft items and construction sets, they will have a different set of knowledge and skills to a child who has never been exposed to these items, but who plays outdoors, using gross motor skills to climb trees and playground equipment.
Nutrition	The body needs fuel to grow and stay healthy, so children with poor nutrition will have less energy and may develop growth issues that hinder their physical performance or ability to persist.
Injury	Injuries may stop children participating in experiences, either because they physically can't or because the injury has made them scared or unwilling to participate in activities. For example, if a child falls from a fort, they may choose not to use the fort in fear that they will fall again.
Disease and illness	Both short-term and chronic illness and disease affect children's energy, and they may not be able to use part of their body (either temporarily or permanently).

Child growth standards

Children up to five years of age have been measured against World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards.

These standards were developed based on 8,440 children from Brazil, Ghana, India, Norway, Oman and the US. They provide a scale that can be used along with other information to determine whether a child is developing at an expected rate and within the appropriate weight, length and head circumference sizes.

You can find all charts showing the WHO child growth standards on the World Health Organization website: aspirelr.link/who-child-growth-standards.

Reflexes

Infants are born with a set of involuntary skills called reflexes.

Some of these reflexes are survival reflexes and some have no obvious purpose.

Survival reflexes include:

- breathing – to maintain oxygen supply, blood flow and heart function
- blinking – to moisten and protect their eyes
- crying – this alerts carers to their needs
- rooting, sucking and swallowing – to absorb adequate nutrition
- sneezing – to clear airways
- bowel and bladder movement – to eliminate waste products.

There are also reflexes without a specific purpose. These are outlined in the following table.

	**Tonic neck syndrome (0–20 weeks)** When lying on their side, the infant will have their arm and leg stretched out on that side and on the other side their arm and leg will bend.
	**Grasp (0–4 months)** If an object is placed in the infant's hand or if the palm is stroked, the fingers close around the object and the infant is unable to let go voluntarily.
	**Walking reflex (0–4 months)** If you hold the infant around the stomach for support and place the feet on a solid surface, the feet will step forward.
	**Moro or startle reflex (0–6 months)** If the infant falls backwards, the arms and legs will extend out suddenly, then move back towards the body.
	**Babinski reflex (0–12 months)** If you stroke the infant's foot along the arch from heel to toe, their toes will spread out.

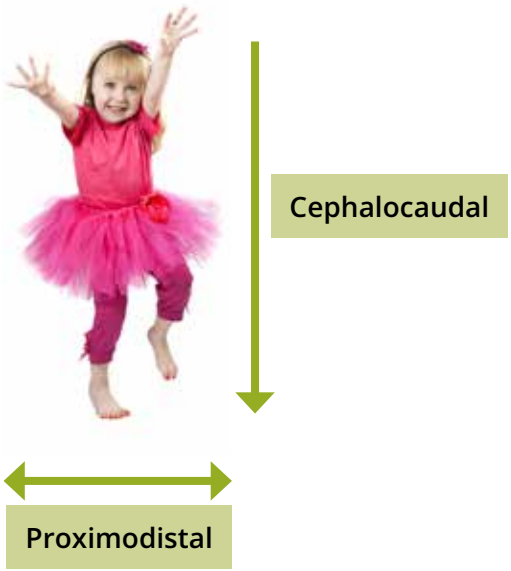
Cephalocaudal and proximodistal development

The terms 'cephalocaudal development' and 'proximodistal development' relate to the predictable sequence of physical growth and development.

Development that starts from the head and works down is called cephalocaudal development. Development that starts from the centre of the body and works outward is called proximodistal development. This sequence occurs due to the development of the brain and its progression of control over the body.

This sequence of growth can be seen if you review the milestones of development, as infants first use their torso, arms and legs, and progress from large movements to the smaller, finer abilities in their fingers and toes.

Since the large muscles of the body develop before the small muscles, development milestones often occur in a certain sequence. A child may also experience splinter skills, where milestones are achieved out of sequence.



Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills involve smaller movements of the body, such as moving the wrists, hands, fingers, feet and toes.

These are used for manipulation, movement and hand–eye coordination, and include skills such as:

- writing
- turning a page
- threading
- clicking fingers
- pinching clay
- weaving
- flipping cards

- playing the piano.

Hand grasp develops in sequence and influences a child's ability to control their activities. Skills like hand grasp are influenced by the environment, so if a child is not provided with opportunities to grasp objects, this skill will not develop well and their dexterity may be poor.

Palmar grasp

A palmar grasp appears once the grasp reflex has disappeared, at around four months old. The whole fist is used in this grasp, with the palm covering the object and the fingers intentionally curling around the object. The child is able to let go of the object when they want to.

Pincer grasp

A pincer grasp occurs next as the fingers become more controlled. The pincer grasp is useful for picking up small objects and uses the index finger and thumb together in a pinching motion.

Tripod grasp

A tripod grasp follows, where a thick crayon or piece of food is held with the fingers in a tripod style with two fingers and the thumb.

Pencil grasp

Finally, a pencil grasp develops. This enables the child to have greater control over their drawing or writing implement.

Gross motor and fundamental movement skills

Gross motor skills are fundamental, or major, movement patterns involving large muscle groups in the legs, arms, trunk and head.

These skills include:

- sitting up
- walking
- running
- hopping
- catching a ball.

These are the foundation movements that are used in more specialised, challenging and complex actions needed for play, active games, sports, dance, gymnastics and physical recreation activities.

Fundamental movement skills can be divided into three categories:

- Body management skills – involving balance
- Loco-motor skills – involving moving the body in a direction
- Object control skills – involving holding and using objects

Emerging gross motor skills

To allow children to practise and develop their emerging gross motor skills, they need access to equipment, games and toys that encourage this.

This means supplying equipment to build skills.

The following are examples of equipment that support gross motor and fundamental movement skills.

Fundamental movement skill	Movement	Equipment
Body management skills	• Bending • Swinging • Climbing • Lifting • Reaching	• Climbing frames • Ladders • Steps or stairs • Monkey bars • Building tall structures
Loco-motor skills	• Crawling • Walking • Skipping • Jumping • Running • Hopping	• Indoor space to crawl and walk • Furniture to hold onto • Outdoor space to run, skip and hop • Skipping ropes • Push-along trolleys • Dolls and prams • Tricycles and bicycles • Trampolines • Stepping stones
Object control skills	• Throwing • Catching • Batting • Kicking • Shovelling	• Balls • Shovels and spades • Bats • Digging patches • Basketball hoops • Bean bags

Kinaesthetic awareness

Kinaesthetic awareness is a sensory skill that allows you to be aware of your body and able to control it.

This stops you from bumping into things or falling over objects and helps you to coordinate your movements. It is about being aware of your muscles and being able to control and coordinate them. To develop strong kinaesthetic skills, you need to practise getting your muscles to do what you need them to do.

Dancing requires kinaesthetic awareness.

All children benefit from experiences that develop kinaesthetic awareness, but it is especially useful for children who are tense and need to practise relaxation or who need to control parts of their body. Some children learn through kinaesthetic experiences more easily than by listening or watching. The experiences bring interest and fun to learning.

Kinaesthetic experiences involve activities where the child learns through doing. They include:

- dance (either free-form or a coordinated routine)
- creative arts
- cooking
- building and fixing things
- drama
- crawling into crawl spaces
- blindfold games
- feely or surprise bag games.

Physical development milestones

There are milestones for gross motor skills and fine motor skills that are associated with children of different ages.

The following table illustrates some milestones for each age group. These milestones have been sourced from ACECQA's publication *Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards*, which can be accessed at: aspirelr.link/developmental-milestones-eylf.

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
0–4 months	➤ Moves whole body ➤ Begins to roll from side to side ➤ Takes swipes at dangling objects ➤ Raises head while lying on stomach	➤ Reflexively grasps a finger or object placed in their hand ➤ Opens and shuts hands

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
4–8 months	➤ Plays with feet and toes ➤ Tries to sit up alone ➤ Can reach for things voluntarily ➤ Holds head upright in a sitting position ➤ Raises head and chest when on stomach ➤ Rolls over ➤ Makes crawling movements ➤ Can hold own weight in standing position	➤ Brings hands and toys to their mouth ➤ Shakes toys
8–12 months	➤ Sits without support ➤ Crawls or shuffles ➤ Brings toes to mouth ➤ Pulls self to standing position by holding onto furniture ➤ Walks with assistance ➤ May be able to walk independently	➤ Transfers objects from one hand to another ➤ Pokes with thumb and fingers ➤ Holds small items ➤ Throws small items ➤ Can hold spoon and try to feed self ➤ Can feed self with hands ➤ Rolls a ball
1–2 years	➤ Walks, climbs and runs ➤ Crawls up stairs ➤ Dances to music ➤ Climbs onto chairs ➤ Kicks and throws a ball ➤ Squats	➤ Holds large crayons with a palmar grasp (in a fist) and marks paper ➤ Places objects in another person's hand and lets go ➤ Turns pages of a book ➤ Drinks from a cup ➤ Uses spoon and fork
2–3 years	➤ Walks, runs, climbs with ease ➤ Jumps using both feet ➤ Jumps over low objects ➤ Kicks a large ball ➤ Avoids obstacles ➤ Opens doors ➤ Can stop walking or running readily ➤ Dresses with help	➤ Feeds self with fork and spoon ➤ Holds a crayon or pencil between the thumb and fingers ➤ Turns pages of a book one at a time ➤ Scribbles in circles and lines ➤ Catches a rolled ball
3–5 years	➤ Walks up stairs one foot at a time ➤ Balances on one foot momentarily ➤ Dresses and undresses ➤ Hops, jumps and runs ➤ Gallops and skips ➤ Climbs playground equipment ➤ Self-toilets ➤ Enjoys rhythm and movement	➤ Uses scissors with some control ➤ Draws shapes ➤ Begins to hold a crayon/pencil in tripod grasp (between the thumb and two fingers) ➤ Shows hand preference ➤ Feeds self with minimal spills

Practice Task 9

1. Number each physical development milestone from 1 to 6 in the order it would be achieved.

- ☐ Begins to roll from side to side
- ☐ Shakes toys
- ☐ Brings toes to mouth
- ☐ Uses spoon and fork
- ☐ Uses scissors with some control
- ☐ Dresses with help

2. Describe how one contextual factor can influence emotional development.

3. Which of the following might be impacts on the development of educators if they research physical theory? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Educators would realise that the body develops in a sequence that is reliant on brain development.
- ☐ Educators would notice that cephalocaudal development influences a child's readiness to use the toilet.
- ☐ Educators would identify that kinaesthetic awareness means that environments need to be attractive.
- ☐ Educators might realise that some children learn best from doing things.
- ☐ Educators may see that babies' reflexes must be planned for and activities provided to develop these reflexes.

2F Social development

Social development approaches and theories guide you to identify the milestones that children are expected to achieve.

They provide an understanding of why children approach social interaction the way they do.

In-depth knowledge of a range of development theories and how they relate to social development and work practices provides the basis from which to monitor social skill development, and plan and deliver appropriate programs and experiences for each child.

Social development is influenced by a range of theories, including those that are holistic such as the following:

Social development helps children to build and maintain friendships.

- Temperament and personality identifies the ease in which different children adapt and engage with others and the environment.
- Ecological approach shows how the child's world affects their experiences of life and the opportunities they have for interaction with others.
- Humanistic approach demonstrates that the interactions, support, security and safety provided to a child affects their ability to become all they can be.
- Social learning theory identifies that children learn from watching and copying (modelling) and that this supports the child's decision to develop relationships in particular ways. This includes how the child interacts with others as well as the way they accept or welcome others.
- Sociocultural theory demonstrates how the environment and other people support a child through scaffolding to learn new skills.
- Behaviourist theory shows that reward and punishment help to shape the child.

Social development influences

There are many different ways that children interact, which are influenced by their needs, interests and stage of development.

Some specific influences on social development are described in the following table.

Contextual factor	Influence on social development
Age-related stages	Some areas of social development are linked with the child's age, as they relate to their developing use of imagination or understanding of concepts that are difficult to grasp. For example, a children's development allows them to learn how to play games with rules.

Contextual factor	Influence on social development
Gender	Gender can influence social development as children practise skills that relate to their interests. Although each child has their own likes and dislikes, there are interests that are more common to boys than girls and vice versa. Girls are more likely to communicate with each other verbally and therefore often have a higher level of social interaction skills.
Temperament	This affects the way children approach activities and people, and how involved they may be. Their level of understanding of their impact on others can influence relationships.
Interests	If a child's interests include social pursuits, they will be practising skills more regularly than a child whose interests are not social or who finds social activity unenjoyable.
Peer group acceptance (belonging)	How peers see the child and how the child portrays themselves to their peers influences how much social interaction they will have.
Cultural beliefs and practices	Family life experience has an immense influence on each child's abilities as they experience and are affected by the expectations of their family and community.
Environment	An environment can be rich in social opportunities and encourage children to participate with others in a collaborative activity, group experience, individual sharing with adults and problem-solving.
Ability	Children with autism spectrum disorder in particular have difficulty understanding social cues and may lack interest in other people. They may have great difficulty making or maintaining friends.

Play stages theory

Theorist Mildred Parten defined social types of play exhibited by children of different ages.

In play you can see children:

- learning and practising social skills, including taking turns, sharing, cooperating and setting rules
- using cognitive skills, including negotiating, thinking and solving problems
- expressing psychological aspects of themselves, including sharing feelings and working out emotional issues.

Pretend play assists children to explore the world of feelings and relationships. By enacting situations they have seen, children learn about and come to terms with their world, particularly if they are confused by their experiences or do not understand something.

Mildred's social play stages are described in the following table.

Play type	Characteristics	Example	Engaging children in this play
Solitary play 	Solitary play is when children are playing alone and do not have any social contact with others. Solitary play is mostly seen in children under two years, but older children may also be seen engaging in solitary play as they enjoy time alone to pursue their individual interests.	An example of solitary play is when a baby explores a chew toy. Older children may play alone at a dolls house or drive a toy car around on the mat.	An environment set up for solitary play should have experiences that are for one child only, such as a pop-up toy, a sensory mat or a puzzle. Space should be provided that is suitable for one child, such as a small table with one chair, a cushion with an activity or an easel to work at.
Parallel play 	Between two and three years of age, children begin to enjoy being near others and participating in the same experience. Although they are still self-centred and are usually unable to share or talk with others very much, they may imitate a child nearby by playing in the same manner. Older children may choose to play side by side in parallel play, even though they have the skills to play together.	An example of parallel play is when two three-year-olds are at the play dough table, both squeezing and poking the dough, but not interacting with each other.	To set up for parallel play, you should provide experiences that allow small groups of children to work on the same or similar play experiences independently, such as: ➤ puzzles ➤ collages (cutting and pasting) ➤ car mats ➤ blocks ➤ painting ➤ drawing ➤ a book area ➤ hammering ➤ a sandpit.

Play type	Characteristics	Example	Engaging children in this play
Associative play 	Associative play usually starts when children are at early preschool age and are beginning to associate with each other. As a child's language skills improve, they become more aware of other children and better able to communicate. A child may play with others, speak briefly to them, laugh with them and react to them. Although these children are playing together, you will find their interactions are brief and the play episode may not last very long.	In associative play, children may borrow and lend toys, and laugh together without actually cooperating or playing with common ideas in mind. Early superhero play is often observed at an associative play level as groups of children 'fly' around and deal with emergencies. However, the play isn't organised and the children don't talk together about plots or characters.	To encourage associative play, you can provide experiences that require children to share materials with others; for example: ➤ car mats ➤ block areas ➤ dress-up areas ➤ props for imaginative play such as toy cars, hats, clothes, bikes and dolls.
Cooperative play 	By late preschool age, children become less focused on themselves and their interest in other children increases. Because their language is becoming more complex, their interactions with other children usually last longer as they begin to share ideas and solve problems together. They enjoy taking the roles of leader or follower, and they give roles to each other in their play. Because children are working together and the play is lasting longer, this is called cooperative play.	In cooperative play, children arrange plots and give directions to others such as, 'You be the dad, I'll be the mum. Joey can be the baby.' Plots will be discussed and played out; for example, 'Now you go to the table and I will come in and serve dinner.'	You can encourage cooperative play by providing for role-play, and imaginative or dramatic activities. You may include dress-ups, cubbies, home furniture and other props that children can use. Car mats, block areas and dress-up areas all provide children with the opportunity for cooperative play.

Play type	Characteristics	Example	Engaging children in this play
Play with rules 	Older preschool and early primary school children become interested in more structured games; that is, games with clearly defined rules. Children choose to play these games during their leisure time with any number of friends.	Games with rules include: › board games and tabletop games › games played in lines or circles › games with balls, bats or marbles › skipping games › hopscotch › cricket › football.	You can help support play with rules by ensuring materials and equipment are in good order and readily available to children. Most play with rules requires space and an understanding of the rules of play.
Unoccupied play 	Children of all ages can become involved in unoccupied play, when the child is not playing, but is occupied by watching anything that happens to be of momentary interest.	The child may play with their body or clothes, get on and off chairs, stand around, follow an educator or sit in one spot glancing around the room.	Unoccupied play may not seem important, but you must respect a child's decision not to participate, and see the value in a child's observation of an environment and the people in it.
Onlooker play 	A child who spends time watching other children at play is using onlooker play. Children of all ages can become involved in onlooker play. This type of play differs from unoccupied play in that the onlooker is observing a particular group of children. The child stands or sits within speaking distance of the group so that they can see and hear everything that takes place.	The child may talk to the children they are observing by asking questions or giving suggestions, but the child does not enter into the play.	As with unoccupied play, onlooker play may not seem important, but again you must respect a child's decision not to participate and see the value in a child's observation of others.

Adapting a game for non-competitive play

Games do not always have to be competitive, with clear winners and losers. Instead, most games can be adapted for non-competitive play.

For example, musical statues can be adapted so that it isn't competitive but is still fun and involves all children. To do so, take the following steps:

1. Commence the game with all children moving to the music.
2. When you stop the music the child who stops moving last can come out of the game and be in control of stopping and starting the music or directing the remaining children into movement ideas (e.g. jumping, spinning, hopping, etc.) until the music stops.
3. The child who stops moving last comes out of the game and the child who missed the last turn goes back into the game again.

This means that all children are occupied and all children continue to practise their skills. It also means that the game can continue for the period of time chosen.

Play stages theory in practice

In order to apply the play stages theory, you need to understand how it influences development.

The following table describes how this theory may influence your practice in some areas of development.

Development	How play stages theory influences practice
Relationship preferences	➢ Children participate in play relevant to their peer group and their stage of development. ➢ Children will be involved more intensely if their peers have similar interests and play goals.
Ethical development	➢ The stages of play clearly define the ability of the child to relate to others. For example: – Associative and cooperative play may challenge ethical attitudes; for example, if superheroes and villains are included in play. – Associative and cooperative play often require prosocial skills or reflect the modelling of these skills. Cooperative play is also a place where ethics and moral issues can be explored. – In play with rules, ethics may relate to winning and losing, and whether it is acceptable to cheat.

Friendship theory

Children go through different stages of friendship, in which they understand the concept of friendship differently.

Robert Selman's ideas on friendship stages help to demonstrate the importance of these relationships to children at various stages and identify ways to support the development of peer relationships. Despite the stages of friendship, even toddlers interact differently with friends than with others.

For a young child a friend is someone who they:

- spend more time with
- attempt reconciliation with more often
- quarrel more with
- are more forgiving of.

Friendship is a valuable development tool.

Through friendships children learn about:

- compromise
- sharing
- decision-making
- problem-solving
- how their emotions affect others
- leadership
- winning and losing
- social and prosocial behaviours
- different viewpoints and perspectives
- similarities and differences
- character and personality.

The following guide to friendship stages is based on the age and developmental stage of children in early childhood, although Selman's theory extends into young adulthood.

Pre-friendship (infants and young toddlers)	- Relationships with adults are most important at this stage as needs must be met. - The child has momentary physical playmates. - The child is not able to articulate their ideas about friendship.
Stage 1 (older toddlers and preschoolers)	- Relationships with peers start to have more importance. - The child does not understand that others have different perspectives. - A friend is generally someone who is in the same space at the same time and sharing the same activity. - Friendships are often temporary or related to current needs. - Enduring friendship is not understood. - One-way feelings or friendship actions are acceptable (for example, only one child may share a toy).

Stage 2 (older preschoolers and school-age children)	➤ Realises others might see things differently, but has trouble understanding two or more perspectives at once. ➤ A friend is someone who does something that pleases or is helpful. ➤ A close friend is someone the child knows better than others. ➤ Cooperation and some reciprocal action is expected.

Friendship involves forming a stable and intimate relationship with a peer. Popularity involves gaining acceptance among peers. Popular children are seen to be friendly, helpful and considerate, and become popular by:

- making attempts to enter groups
- initially going along with play or others' ideas
- not asking too many questions
- not trying to change a group's agenda.

Popularity and friendship, including peer acceptance, both contribute to a child's wellbeing as they:

- assist in the development of leadership skills, assertiveness and conflict-resolution strategies
- provide a safe context for self-exploration
- meet their needs for intimacy, belonging and social support.

Friendship theory in practice

There are two concepts related to friendship that educators have an influence over.

These concepts are described in the following table.

Concept	Description
Understanding friendship	The concept of friendship is about having others that are close to you, understand you, share your interests and care for you. This is in contrast to social media, where friendship can be based on quantity and competition rather than quality. You can assist children to understand what friendship means and to treat all people fairly by avoiding phrases such as: ➤ 'We are all friends' – children will not be able to understand the word 'friends' if you use it so generally, so try saying 'We all need to care for each other' instead. ➤ 'Be gentle with your friends' when aggression occurs – by using this phrase you are advising the child that if someone is not your friend then it is okay to be rough. Try saying 'Be gentle with people' or 'Nobody likes to be hurt' instead.

Concept	Description
Development of positive friendships	Support children to develop healthy friendships, care for others and enjoy their relationships by: › respecting each child's friendship choices › understanding that some children have large groups of friends while others have fewer close friends › acknowledging that some children make friends easily and quickly, while others make friends slowly › letting children choose their own friendships › encouraging children to spend time together › providing free play time to develop relationships › supporting children to resolve problems, conflicts and other issues.

Milestones of social development

When you monitor children's development against milestones and the EYLF outcomes, you ensure their current abilities are identified.

This allows you to take note of the skills they are developing. By recognising and recording these, you are gathering assessments for learning that assist you to provide an ongoing and responsive curriculum.

Some of the most common social development milestones are provided in the following table.

Age	Social development milestone
0–6 months	› Develops social smile around six weeks › Enjoys social play with caregivers › Fascination and interest in mirror images of self › Squeals with delight › Uses various cues for gaining attention to needs
6–12 months	› Imitates people during play › Becomes increasingly shy with strangers › Separation anxiety increases › May begin to test caregiver and parent responses to behaviour
1–2 years	› Demonstrates self-awareness › Separation anxiety may begin to fade › Defiant behaviour is more apparent
2–3 years	› Separates from parents/caregivers › Imitates the world around them through social play › Does not have the ability to share toys and equipment
3–5 years	› Can cooperate with other children more regularly › Negotiates simple solutions to problems and conflicts with peers › Pretend play increases as children act out what they see › More likely to listen and respond to rules

A document that summarises developmental milestones with links to the EYLF is available at: aspirelr.link/developmental-milestones-eylf.

Practice Task 10

1. Which of the following statements are impacts on the development of educators if they research social development theory? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Social development theories guide you to identify the milestones that children are expected to achieve, and provide an understanding of why children approach social interaction in the way they do. * Yes * No

   b. Temperament and personality, ecological and humanistic approaches, social learning, sociocultural learning and behaviourist theories are all influences that support a child's holistic emotional development. * Yes * No

   c. Experiences should be set up to cater for the next play stage the children are working toward. This helps them to develop. * Yes * No

   d. Robert Selman's ideas on friendship stages demonstrate that children must be friends with all those in the group. This is part of the stages of development of peer relationships. * Yes * No

   e. Milestones of children's social development derive from the actions we see children undertake when they read a book by themselves. * Yes * No

Summary

- Theories of development support milestones that occur in sequence.
- Each area of development is integrated with other areas – physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication.
- Cognitive development is about how the brain functions, develops and makes sense of information.
- Cognitive development involves the development of thinking and learning, and relates to aspects such as language, attention span, planning, creativity, problem-solving and memory.
- A child's language development begins from the moment they are born, with newborns making noises and attempting to communicate.
- You need to understand theories relating to emotional development and emotional development milestones in order to know more about individual children and their emotional needs.
- Psychological development relates to a person's mental health and wellbeing.
- Emotional and social development are closely linked; social development is about relationships and interactions with others, whereas emotional development focuses on how you feel and how you deal with and express these feelings.
- There are many different ways that children use their bodies. Needs, interests and developmental stages influence these abilities.
- Social development approaches and theories guide you to identify the milestones that children are expected to achieve and provide an understanding of why children approach social interaction in the way they do.

Learning Checkpoint 2
Theories of development

1. Research and explain how the following theories support your understanding of belonging:

   a. Ecological theory

   b. Humanistic theory

2. Draw a line to match each holistic development theory or research to the example of an impact on the educator's development.

* Humanistic theory	* The educator realises that children need to practise skills and experience similar learning opportunities so that the connections in their brains are strengthened.
* Brain development	* The educator realises that to help a child feel a sense of belonging, they must talk with the child's family members and learn about their background and the influences that impact their lives.
* Sociocultural theory	* The educator recognises that basic needs must be met if children are to learn and develop to their full potential.
* Behaviourist theory	* The educator identifies that children learn from modelling.
* Social learning theory	* The educator realises that emerging skills can be scaffolded.
* Ecological approach	* The educator identifies that positive reinforcement supports learning.

3. Read the following quotes from credible sources of information that demonstrate how all areas of development are interrelated during play, then answer the question that follows.

Quote 1

'Play is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- stimulates a sense of wellbeing.'

Source: *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF)

Quote 2

'Play allows children to communicate ideas, to understand others through social interaction, paving the way to build deeper understanding and more powerful relationships.'

'Planning for physical spaces and equipment should follow child-centred principles. Guidelines on room construction should reflect the need for large spaces to support movement and interactions of young children.'

Source: *Learning through play: Strengthening learning through play in early childhood education programmes*, The LEGO foundation in support of UNICEF, unicef.org

Rewrite statements within these quotes that comment on each of the following developmental areas and how they are interrelated during play.

a. Cognitive development

b. Communication development

c. Emotional development

d. Physical development

e. Social development

4. Number each cognitive milestone from 1 to 6 in the order you would expect them to occur.

- ☐ Searches for partially hidden objects
- ☐ Explores the world with their hands and mouth
- ☐ Recognises objects in pictures
- ☐ Smiles at own image in the mirror
- ☐ Counts five to ten things
- ☐ Knows some body parts

5. Number each communication milestone from 1 to 8 in the order you would expect them to occur.

☐ Begins to make sounds that are referred to as babble

☐ Clear speech with only a few grammatical errors

☐ Makes a variety of noises to capture an adult's attention

☐ Begins asking 'Why?' and 'What?' questions

☐ Can respond to verbal requests

☐ Begins to imitate spoken words; first words may be spoken

☐ Tells stories and recalls past events

☐ Identifies names of people and familiar objects

6. Which of the following statements about emotional milestones are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. It is expected that an infant will cry if they hear another infant cry. * Yes * No

b. At the age of 6–12 months children should be comfortable with all educators. * Yes * No

c. At the age of 1–2 years children want educators to do everything for them. * Yes * No

d. At 2–3 years children may be attached to a comfort toy. * Yes * No

e. At 3–4 years children become more capable of negotiating solutions to conflicts with peers. * Yes * No

7. Draw a line to match each physical development milestone with the age range of the child.

* Crawls up stairs	* 0–4 months
* Raises head and chest when on stomach	* 4–8 months
* Balances on one foot momentarily	* 8–12 months
* Reflexively grasps finger or object placed in their hand	* 1–2 years
* Pulls self to standing position by holding onto furniture	* 2–3 years
* Kicks a large ball	* 3–5 years

8. Draw a line to match each social development milestone with the age range of the child.

* May begin to test caregiver and parent responses to behaviour	* 0–6 months
* Demonstrates self-awareness	* 6–12 months
* Uses various cues for gaining attention to needs	* 1–2 years
* Pretend play increases as children act out what they see	* 2–3 years
* Does not have the ability to share toys and equipment	* 3–5 years

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

- **3A** Investigating, exploring and experimenting
- **3B** Science, mathematics, engineering and technology
- **3C** Literacy-rich environments
- **3D** Self-esteem and identity
- **3E** Recognising emotions
- **3F** Physical fitness, health and wellbeing
- **3G** Supporting agency

Opportunities for development

Children participate more readily and openly when they feel a sense of belonging.

Aim to develop a warm and communicative relationship with children, and spend time interacting and talking with them.

Children's immediate carers, particularly their family, along with those from the wider social environment, are the primary influences on their development. Educators are responsible for building on children's skills and knowledge by providing developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, interactive environments, guidance, support, and ongoing assessment and monitoring of social skills and development.

One way to accommodate a child's development is to explore each child's family life and link family aspects. This increases the connection between home and the service, and extends each child's experience as they share their skills and knowledge. When children gain a sense of community, they feel a sense of belonging and develop an understanding of their own identity.

Children enjoy being challenged by their experiences as this engages them in the activity and ensures their skills are applied and developed. Developing challenging activities involves being able to competently extend and expand on a child's current skills. This also supports their developing and ongoing sense of agency.

3A Investigating, exploring and experimenting

When children explore and experiment, they become engrossed in what they are doing, which helps to bring out new skills and knowledge.

Children are more likely to be engaged in activities that are based on their interests and strengths. They are more likely to become engaged when they have participated in developing the plan of activities and/or when they are curious. Curiosity is related to natural inquisitive behaviours such as exploration, investigation and learning.

Encourage children to investigate and explore to develop their interests.

Curiosity is important as it:

- keeps the mind active
- opens up new possibilities and ideas
- enables excitement.

You can demonstrate and encourage curiosity by:

- keeping an open mind – be ready to see things from other points of view, especially the child's
- not taking things for granted – start from scratch; approach each idea as though it is the first time you have thought about this point and you are discovering it again
- asking questions – open questions encourage communication, interest and enthusiasm; the questions may be about the activity or the learning experience
- having a positive attitude
- seeing learning as fun
- showing interest in a variety of topics and ideas.

Curiosity is significant when initiating a new activity or experience; it may encourage participation and build on existing knowledge, skills and interests.

Example

Experimenting with plants

Dawn asks the children if they know what plants need for healthy growth. The children think about the question and then hypothesise and offer suggestions. The children come up with different suggestions relating to light, water and soil. Together they decide to experiment to find out the answer. They set up the following experiments with seedlings:

- One plant sits in the sun, but is given no water.
- One plant is given water, but sits in a dark cupboard.
- Another plant is given water and sunlight.

Dawn suggests they place another seedling in a bottle of water so they can see its roots without soil. The children watch and wait to see the outcome. When the result identifies that the plants need water, soil and light, Dawn implements a range of further experiences about growing plants and seeds.

Perceptual development

Perceptual development is about how the senses are used to understand the world.

The sensory experiences a child is involved in increase their ability to send messages from the brain to the body.

Sensory experiences occur when children participate in activities such as:

- washing
- cleaning
- cooking
- listening
- using different environments for play
- using tactile materials during play
- looking at faces
- comparing images
- interacting with hanging mobiles.

The environment must not be overloaded with sensory stimulation or children will find it difficult to focus and will be easily distracted.

Attention span

Attention is the ability to focus on particular activities or information for a significant amount of time.

Attention is important for cognition and cognitive processes such as memory. The ability to maintain attention is needed to promote the thought processes that are necessary for learning to occur. When you engage children in an activity, you are stimulating them and improving their ability to concentrate or maintain attention.

When children continue activities and experiences, this strengthens their attention span, and they have a greater ability to be engaged and learn. Engagement and attention span are closely linked and, although attention span is a cognitive skill, the manner in which you develop this skill is derived from the child's interests and current skills. Children will pay attention to an activity or experience that interests them for much longer than one that does not interest them.

Example

Extending a child's attention span

Leonard's attention span is low when in a group activity. He becomes agitated and often leaves the group within minutes.

His educator uses his interest in trains to deliver a group experience. She reads a story about a train and sings a train song. At the end of the group experience, she asks the children questions that will interest Leonard. She asks what the children know about trains and includes specific details that Leonard will know, such as 'What is the name of the part where the smoke comes from?' and 'What powers the steam train?'

At the next group time, Leonard fully participates for more than 10 minutes without interruption.

Challenging activity

The scaffolding you plan for children leads you towards appropriately challenging activities.

Through observations and interactions, you will identify and monitor the child's level of confidence as they are challenged, which enables you to ensure they do not become frustrated or overwhelmed.

The following table provides examples of how you can identify when a child is being challenged positively and how you can support them.

What they may say	What cues they may give	What you can do
➤ 'This is hard, but I can do it.' ➤ 'I know I can do it if I try hard.' ➤ 'Look what I can do.' ➤ 'I need a little help, but not much.'	➤ Smiling ➤ Humming or singing ➤ Concentrating ➤ Succeeding ➤ Working on the task for some time with progress ➤ Asking for a little bit of help or feedback, but not wanting you to take over or complete the activity for them	➤ Stay nearby to ensure you provide timely support ➤ Offer ideas and help only when needed or asked for ➤ Comment on the process or skill involved ➤ Allow time and space for the child to succeed

Thinking, reasoning and hypothesising

Thinking, reasoning and hypothesising are ways to explore and make sense of the world.

Each of the terms are explained here:

- Thinking is the process of coming up with ideas, remembering, developing an opinion or making a decision.
- Reasoning is the ability to think logically.
- Hypothesising is the process of guessing how or why something will occur.

Instead of telling children the answers to questions, encourage them to use thinking, reasoning and hypothesising, and then experiment to reach a solution. You can start the discussion or follow on from a child's lead.

Inquiry

Inquiry is about exploring new ideas and challenges to try to make sense of the world.

It involves examining something in detail, experimenting and performing an action to find something out. It can also involve risk as the child is unsure of the result and needs to be prepared for unexpected outcomes.

Inquiry involves providing children with new experiences to help them make sense of the world.

Some outcomes will challenge and intrigue the child. Intrigue may occur if the child is unable to complete the inquiry for some reason, or if they cannot find the answer. The child may also be surprised and may need further help due to their experiment not turning out how they expected. A child may be surprised when they work something out and feel excited that they have learnt something new.

When planning to provide inquiry experiences, try to match the type of challenge and investigation with the stage of the child. If the child is in the sensorimotor stage, their inquiry will involve safe sensory exploration, such as:

- tasting different foods and drinks
- feeling the difference between two different things
- touching something they haven't felt before.

The preoperational child will have more questions and many ways of looking at things – not all of them logical.

Some skills children may develop through an inquiry process are:

- exploring
- identifying
- classifying (sorting)
- comparing and contrasting
- hypothesising (putting forward an idea and testing it).

They will have the opportunity to make mistakes as part of learning. As they try to understand how something works, the child will hypothesise and use the inquiry process to find the correct answer.

Inquiry processes can be implemented as group or individual experiences. Any time you are investigating a 'why' or 'how' question with the children, you are involved in inquiry. Preschool children often ask 'why' or 'how' questions, and there are regular opportunities for you to ask these questions of the children too, facilitating intrigue with something they may not have thought about before.

Initiating inquiry

Inquiry is valuable to children as it helps them to find out what is real, what is imaginary and what the answers to their questions are.

It challenges cognitive abilities in the preoperational stage as children grapple with ideas such as measurement and number, and links to other developmental areas, such as those shown in the following table.

Developmental area	Characteristics
Physical	Carrying out physical tasks of varying difficulties such as lifting or moving equipment
Social	Sharing ideas and helping each other
Emotional	Feeling a sense of pride in finding out an answer
Communication	Asking questions, finding out about new terms and meanings

The ideas children have may launch an inquiry process in which you provide intentional teaching and set up learning environments that build on their interests. To use inquiry as a strategy for learning, take the following steps.

Step	Example
1. Identify something the children are interested in, or provide a new item or experience.	Rex has brought a new basketball in to show the group. The children are intrigued by the ball.
2. Find out what the children already know.	Ask the children questions: › Do you know what the ball is for? › What game do you play with it? › What is it made of? › What makes the ball hard?
3. Find out what the children want to know.	You find out that the children would like to know: › the rules of basketball › how the basketball is made › what makes it hard.

Step	Example
4. Discuss the item or interest and introduce correct terminology or language.	➤ Introduce a simple basketball game so that the children can play and learn the rules. ➤ Talk about the differences between man-made and natural materials. ➤ Show the children how to pump up a ball. Let them see how the ball is soft without air inside. ➤ Introduce new words: 'hoop', 'backboard', 'foul' and 'dribbling'.
5. Expand the topic or item into other areas of the curriculum.	Introduce other types of balls to play indoors and outdoors, including: ➤ small soft balls and a bucket so that the children can throw the ball into the bucket from a distance ➤ a soccer ball ➤ an AFL football.
6. Watch for decreasing interest; this tells you the children are finished with this inquiry.	After a week and a half, fewer children are playing. You decide to start a new topic of inquiry.

Concept development

Once children have developed an understanding of concepts, these can be extended and used in different ways to stimulate curiosity and learning.

A concept is a thought or idea that can be developed through:

- encouraging active exploration, experimentation and learning
- introducing new ideas and experiences via formal, informal, planned and spontaneous experiences
- encouraging curriculum input from children, staff, parents and the community
- encouraging problem-solving and curiosity.

Concept development can be further stimulated by:

- being enthusiastic
- creating an interesting environment
- allowing for safe exploration
- using your direct environment to explore; for example, listening to the wind or rain, finding out what lives in the yard, watching clouds and playing in the sand or mud
- using materials and equipment that engage the senses
- allowing children to find out how things work through experimentation
- responding to individual interests
- using a problem-solving approach
- including children in community activities.

Resources for supporting concept development during play are outlined in the following table.

Age	Resource and activity examples
0–6 months	➢ Providing materials and equipment that are easy to grasp and safe to suckPlaying imitation games such as pulling faces ➢ Talking about what is happening ➢ Placing interesting objects, such as hanging mobiles, where the infant can see them
6–12 months	➢ Calling objects by name ➢ Providing materials and equipment that are sturdy ➢ Providing simple pretend play objects, such as telephones, cars and dolls
1–2 years	➢ Providing mirrors ➢ Displaying photographs of familiar faces ➢ Providing simple sorting games
2–3 years	➢ Talking through simple problems ➢ Providing simple puzzles ➢ Providing various materials and equipment in the home area ➢ Providing sorting games or activities
3–4 years	➢ Providing counting and colour activities that use concrete materials ➢ Discussing similarities and differences ➢ Giving simple directions ➢ Discussing time through links with routines ➢ Sharing stories ➢ Providing art experiences with crayons, paper, pencils and paint ➢ Exposing children to different words

Risk-taking

Almost every milestone in every area of development has an element of risk.

This risk may be physical (e.g. someone might get hurt) or emotional (e.g. someone might feel embarrassed, ridiculed or punished). For example, physical risk-taking occurs when a child is learning to sit, stand, walk, jump, hop, climb or balance.

When it comes to cognitive development, risk-taking in learning relates to the chances children take in their thinking, reasoning, hypothesising and experimenting. Children need to be encouraged to try new ideas and practices; these involve taking a risk, as the idea or practice may not be successful.

Children take risks every time they try something new.

Children who are not confident taking a risk to ask a question or explore an answer will not be able to work out their ideas and their communication development may be affected.

Do the following to facilitate learning environments where children feel comfortable taking risks:

- Encourage children to ask questions and try new ideas and new ways of doing things.
- Model acceptance and value unusual ideas.
- Plan for open-ended experiences and activities.
- Provide for inquiry learning; that is, exploring, experimenting, testing and investigating.
- Encourage spontaneity and advise children that mistakes are opportunities to learn.
- Provide appropriate levels of challenge.
- Encourage guesswork and hypothesising (speculating on what they think might happen).
- Avoid labelling ideas as 'right' or 'wrong' when children are involved in discussions.

Patterns, sorting and comparing

You can scaffold children's skills by providing activities to consolidate and further develop ideas.

Infants and toddlers start to sort when you involve them in pack-up times; they might put toys of a similar type together or you could suggest that they put all the blocks in one place. At preoperational stage, making patterns, sorting and comparing are emerging concepts, and children cannot sort by more than one characteristic. For example, when completing a puzzle, a child can look at the shapes of the pieces or the colour of the pieces, but looking at both at once can be challenging.

Open-ended materials and equipment are excellent for creating patterns and practising sorting and comparing. You can also develop games that employ these concepts. Comparing and sorting are useful for developing cognitive skills such as learning about similarities and differences.

Taking apart activities

Children can use tools to explore the workings of interesting items and find out what's inside.

With adult support, children can see how cars, motorcycles, lawn mowers and other machinery work.

To challenge children's thinking, you could:

- ask them to draw what they might find inside the item prior to taking it apart
- take the item apart and see if the children can guess what it is (take a photograph first so that you can show the children what it originally looked like)
- take photographs at various stages so children can understand sequence and refer back to the photos to put the item back together.

You may need parent permission before you begin projects such as deconstruction. Ensure the children are aware that they need your permission before taking things apart; the items must be old or discarded and the child must have an adult with them at all times.

The natural environment

Environmental experiences include finding out about how people interact with the natural world.

Ultimately, you are seeking to build knowledge and skills so children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment (Outcome 2 of the EYLF). All children participate through observation and exploration. They enjoy being introduced to natural materials and equipment from the local environment and to a range of people in the community. They might explore the local environment, talking to visitors and going on excursions.

Encourage children to take an interest in the natural environment.

Some common environmental activities you can include involve:

- watching insects
- taking notice of the garden
- planting seeds or plants
- identifying similarities and differences in peers
- recycling materials and equipment
- saving water
- sun safety
- planting trees
- what people, insects and animals need to stay alive.

Sustainability

The term sustainability is commonly used to explain the need to manage current world resources so that future generations are not affected.

You should attempt to reduce, reuse and recycle resources wherever possible. Children can participate in environmental sustainability by planning, developing and implementing ideas for:

- waste disposal, including paper, plastic and metal recycling, composting and worm farms
- water conservation, including installing water-saving devices and water tanks, monitoring water use and using grey water
- using environmentally friendly cleaning products
- reducing waste and using natural and recycled materials.

Practice Task 11

1. Which of the following statements are correct about children's learning when they investigate, explore and experiment? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Routines and activities that include pattern, sorting and deconstructing of everyday items can support children's cognitive development as they allow for development of ideas, concepts and understanding.
- [ ] Children will be more likely to explore, experiment and take risks if they are interested and the activities are matched to their ability level and stage of development.
- [ ] The natural environment provides many opportunities to explore and learn. This can lead to questioning and learning about social responsibility and sustainability.
- [ ] It is better to answer a child's questions so that they get the correct information rather than letting them come up with ideas and experiment, as this may lead to failure and frustration.
- [ ] Perceptual development relates to how a child perceives a risk and adapts the environment to reduce the risk.

2. Draw a line to match the beginning of each term about investigation, exploring and experimenting to its definition.

* Inquiries	* These should be monitored and planned to ensure they are at the correct level and do not cause the child to become frustrated or overwhelmed.
* Challenges	* This should be encouraged, modelled and supported as it relates to the chances children take in their experimenting, hypothesising, thinking and reasoning.
* Concepts	* These should be developed to encourage exploration, new ideas, problem-solving and curiosity.
* Risk-taking	* These should be explored and planned for to help children understand, learn about and make sense of the world. They can include intentional teaching.

3B Science, mathematics, engineering and technology

Most children find scientific, mathematic, engineering and technological learning experiences intriguing and enjoyable.

Your outlook should reflect interest and confidence; a nervous or unsure approach can affect the child's curiosity and learning.

You can present science, maths, engineering and technology experiences in a fun and valuable way by pointing out the type of learning that is occurring. For example, when you are counting say, 'We're doing maths!' If you are watching an insect, comment, 'This is science. Isn't it interesting!' If the children are building with blocks or sand, say, 'You are working just like an engineer'.

Encourage children to use concepts of maths, science and engineering in their play.

Be ready for questions you don't know the answer to. When you don't have an answer, you can show that investigation is important and that nobody knows everything. This is a perfect opportunity to investigate together – get some books from the library or search on the internet to show children how they can find out information. In some cases, even if you know an answer you can encourage children to find out for themselves to extend their abilities.

Mathematics

Children will come across mathematics concepts on a daily basis.

Maths applies when you ask questions such as:

- How many?
- How big?
- How long?
- What fits?
- What time?

Maths focuses on three specific areas, outlined in the following table.

Number
➤ Counting ➤ Facts about numbers ➤ Operations, such as addition and subtraction

Measurement

- Length
- Money
- Time
- Temperature
- Mass
- Volume and capacity

Space

- Dimensions
- Area
- Position in relation to other objects

Science

Science is about exploring, studying and attempting to understand the world around you.

Science applies when you ask questions such as:

- What is that?
- What can that do?
- What happens when ...?
- How does that work?
- Why does that happen?

Developing scientific skills and understanding requires:

- an attitude of curiosity and determination
- development of cognitive skills necessary for the process
- learning new concepts about the world.

A science experiment does not need to be an organised scientific activity; it may be a simple 'finding out' exercise. A simple experiment may include:

- using sensory exploration to find out about an object
- trying things out
- working out what happens.

Some common, simple experiments include:

- the changes that occur to play dough when it is left out, dampened, the salt crystals become visible or it has flour added to it
- how water moves in the trough and what happens if you add things to it, including whether they float or sink
- how puddles form
- how shadows move
- what happens when you spill something.

You can see from this list that these simple experiments may occur by accident or be engineered as part of a plan. Either way, their main outcome is learning what happens from the experience.

Be prepared that things may not go as planned. This is part of how experiments work, and it is valuable for children to see that things don't always work as planned and think about why this was the case. You may want to talk about how interesting it was that the outcome of the experiment was different to what you expected, or you could try the experiment again. If an experiment doesn't go as planned, this is a good opportunity to model risk-taking and mistakes as part of the learning process.

Technology

Technology links closely with science. Science is about discovering things (concepts), while technology is about applying the knowledge of how things work.

For example:

- Science involves finding out how magnets work.
- Technology involves using magnets to help achieve things like sticking your photo on the fridge.

Technology is something that children see as part of their everyday existence. Interactions with technology might include the use of electronic and digital devices, as well as activities such as cutting with scissors and using glue guns for beading material.

Children use technology every time they use scissors and other tools and equipment.

Examples of activities involving technology include:

- Art: using staplers, masking tape, pieces from broken radios or paint programs on the computer
- Cooking: using frying pans, beaters, blenders, egg rings, ovens or utensils
- Media: taking photos and videos, and making websites
- Construction: designing and building vehicles using materials such as blocks
- Electronics: creating circuits using simple electronic kits

Digital technology

Digital technology is rapidly advancing. Introducing new technology to children can stimulate their curiosity and improve how they listen, see and explore.

Digital technology is not just about screen time, it extends into many other areas. Consider the technology in the following table.

Information communications technology (ICT)	ICT is anything using electronic or digital equipment that allows us to get information or communicate with each other. Computer programs or apps can provide children with stories, music, pictures and other language experiences. Children can learn words, hear other languages, create their own stories, make posters and design a range of things. Older children may use the internet to look up pictures and information. By observing how children use the internet to access different sites, you gain an idea of what they are interested in and like to do. You can build pictures or information that children find into other experiences in your curriculum; for example, printing items for group discussions, reading stories from a screen or using the computer for children to find objects – a trivia hunt. Skype may be used to communicate in real time with other services or people around the world. To ensure children are safe online, install software that blocks inappropriate content and any contact from others online.
CDs/DVDs and headphones	DVDs and headphones can be used to offer small and large group experiences as well as individual activities. Listening to music, poetry and stories can be soothing and allow children time to be alone while encouraging learning, language, listening, imagination and creativity. You can use a range of CDs with or without headphones to play music, multicultural languages and stories. CDs can be used for dancing, singing and listening in a group.
Television	Television may be used to watch a program being broadcasted or a DVD. When working with children under school age, the use of television is not generally supported as it is: › not interactive and children are not involved or participative › inflexible, meaning it cannot change with the children's needs › often considered a 'babysitting' tool, where staff use it in preference to planning quality activities for children. If you choose to use television as part of your program, ensure that you: › have family permission › follow service policies and procedures › preview the entire program before showing it to children › sit with the children when they are watching and involve yourself in any active play or discussion › are prepared to answer any questions that arise from the content › encourage children to discuss what they watched afterwards › plan the program as part of your day, never just 'put on the television'.

Engineering

The interest children have in engineering starts early in life.

Cognitive theory describes these developments through the sensorimotor and preoperational stages.

Many children show an interest in engineering when they build things with blocks.

An infant shows interest in stacking cups and building towers, spends time putting things in and taking things out, and checks that objects are still in place over and over again. They attempt to find new materials and move the old ones to new places, experimenting with sensorimotor development of object permanence.

For older children, construction may be about building structures using blocks, boxes or construction sets, or as complicated as taking apart and rebuilding objects.

During activities involving construction, sorting and comparing, children see the world differently as each layer of understanding unfolds.

Taking apart and reconstructing is an excellent method for answering 'why' questions. Children who ask 'why' questions are trying to make sense of the world and, by providing concrete materials for them to examine, they will find out about things in their own way and at their own pace.

The child will be learning:

- cognitively – about size, shape, weight, length and other concepts, including memorising how things come apart and go back together
- physically – how to manage screws, clips and knobs
- socially through communication – when asking questions, explaining to others what they know and sharing their knowledge of new names for items
- creatively – as they try to imagine how things work
- emotionally and psychologically – as they gain skills and knowledge, receive feedback and achieve success.

There are many concepts that are difficult to explain, so being involved in practical activities can be a good way to learn. Using real-life examples in learning is exciting for children. Children use the things they understand to make up stories of how things work. Intentional teaching then explains what cannot be seen. You could conduct research activities if there are concepts that are beyond the children's abilities or the possibilities of what can be done in your environment.

Example

Linking maths, science, technology and engineering

The following table provides some examples of how sand play links with maths, science, engineering and technology activities.

Experience	Maths	Science	Technology	Engineering
Sandpit with spades, buckets, cars and large pebbles	➤ Counting the pebbles or cars ➤ Working out how many cars or pebbles each child should have ➤ Creating an idea and working out how much space is needed and where each thing will go ➤ Counting how many spades of sand will fill the bucket	➤ Thinking about the properties of sand, such as working out how to push toys through the sand ➤ Finding out what sand is made of	➤ Photographing the stages and/or completed work ➤ Using the bucket to make a sandcastle ➤ Using a spade to fill a bucket or dig a hole	➤ Building castles, roads, moats, walls, etc.

Practice Task 12

1. Draw a line to match each term about mathematics, science, engineering and technology to its definition.

* Mathematics	* Relates to building, constructing, sorting and comparing. Examples include building a block tower, making a paper plane and making a model car.
* Science	* Relates to using objects to complete tasks. Examples include using a torch to make a shadow puppet show, using a camera to take photos and using a comb to brush hair.
* Technology	* Relates to understanding what's going on in the world around you. Examples include leaves changing colour, ice melting and toys floating in water.
* Engineering	* Relates to number, measurement and space. Examples include counting, money and weight.

2. Which statements are true about mathematics, science, engineering and technology? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Educators need to know the answer to all potential questions asked about mathematics, science, engineering and technology so they can guide, show and inform children about the areas they are interested in.
- ☐ Educators should model a positive interest and confidence about mathematics, science, engineering and technology.
- ☐ Activities and experiments should be set up to enhance learning. Intentional teaching may be needed for more difficult concepts.
- ☐ Practical activities are a good teaching method that enhance learning and participation.
- ☐ Educators should provide opportunities for participation in activities involving mathematics, science, engineering and technology, and should identify those subject areas in conversations to draw attention to them in a positive way.

3C Literacy-rich environments

Literacy is the ability to read and write words. School-age children may use these skills to communicate with each other, express themselves and complete activities.

In early childhood, activities such as experimenting with images and print are the beginning of a child's reading and writing skills and, if they capture the child's attention and interest, they support the child to start to read and write, and understand the many symbols used to communicate.

Regularly expose children to letters and words in the environment to encourage literacy.

All written language reflects the culture from which it originated. Familiar culturally constructed text is usually material that matches the language you understand and use. Unfamiliar culturally constructed text is material that uses language you are not used to.

By providing children with the opportunity to engage with diverse text types, you are allowing them to become familiar with the cultural capital of others. This includes Australian English as well as other home languages.

The following table includes some strategies for creating a literacy-enriched environment that introduces images and print from a variety of culturally constructed origins.

Literacy areas	What you can do
Developing a positive attitude toward the use of print	➤ Get excited about books. ➤ Provide books written in different languages. ➤ Talk about the books you have read. ➤ Show children your favourite books. ➤ Bring in interesting articles and pictures from newspapers or magazines from different countries.
Developing an awareness of print	➤ Point out printed words and letters in the environment. ➤ Provide opportunities for writing, drawing and/or scribbling with crayon, markers, pencils, etc. ➤ Encourage children to write; for example, labelling their own items or writing to friends. ➤ Don't worry too much about spelling and word formation in the early years; these will develop over time. ➤ Provide help with spelling, printing and writing stories if asked. ➤ Let the child know that you consider their writing to have meaning by responding to what they want their writing to say.

Literacy areas	What you can do
Gaining skills and knowledge for reading	➤ Show how books can be used to find out things. ➤ Encourage children to work out what words mean in English and other languages. ➤ Encourage children to think about a story: to predict, imagine and project. ➤ Discuss how stories relate to children's lives or what they already know, including stories about children living in non- English-speaking countries.
Playing with words	➤ Follow the child's lead when they play with words spontaneously. ➤ Make up new songs to old tunes. ➤ Point out interesting things about words and names, such as words that start with the same letter, long words and short words. ➤ Sing familiar songs in different languages or use sign language.

The ability to play with words is a milestone demonstrating that the child can use and understand language. Encourage this as you see it developing.

Valuing linguistic heritage

In learning environments, the identification of a child's home (native) language is part of respecting and valuing the family's culture.

If the child's home language is not English, educators need to gather information and be aware of the child's cultural heritage so they can support the child in developing English language skills, while still maintaining their home language.

Value and respect different languages spoken by the children who attend the service.

Families should be encouraged to maintain their home language. At times they may need to be reassured that children are capable of learning more than one language and that early childhood is the most suitable time to do this. Studies have shown that babies learning more than one language speak the same amount of words at the age of 12 months as children learning only one language speak at 18 months. Children who demonstrate appropriate development in their first language are likely to learn new languages more easily. Consider a child's abilities in languages other than English when identifying their level of development.

If languages other than English are not valued, or if a child has no opportunity to use their home language, they are likely to lose these skills. By encouraging all children to use and learn new languages, and by demonstrating an interest in all languages, you assist children to be interested in, maintain and be proud of language skills as well as their cultural background.

Keep in mind that some families may have special words or phrases that you can use. You may also need to encourage families to allow you to support their language.

To encourage families to maintain their home language with their child:

- collect relevant information
- include the first language as part of the orientation process
- respond with respect to any language used
- include the language in the service where possible
- encourage all children to share their culture and language.

There are free programs on the internet that will provide a written and/or audio translation in the chosen language. Try:

- aspirelr.link/google-translate for translating a word, sentence or document
- aspirelr.link/translate-and-speak for translating a word or sentence, or placing the translation into an email.

These internet programs can be used on a phone, tablet or computer to help you communicate easily with a child who is having trouble settling in or is trying to tell you something in their first language.

Choose a more reliable source (such as a professional interpreter) if the information is important or related to health and safety.

Bilingualism

Simultaneous bilingualism refers to a situation in which a child is exposed to more than one language in infancy.

Children learning more than one language simultaneously usually learn in three stages:

1. They mix the languages at times (infants).
2. They separate the words belonging to each language and use whole phrases (toddlers).
3. One language becomes dominant (school age).

Sequential bilingualism refers to a child learning an additional language after the age of three. Children usually learn the additional language in three stages:

1. They become involved in social interactions with speakers of the new language, often relying on memorised phrases.
2. They communicate with speakers of the new language using memorised phrases and new vocabulary. This stage progresses quickly if the child is not afraid to make mistakes.
3. They attempt to speak using correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Children cope well learning more than one language. However, particular things determine how well the child will manage new language learning, including:

- how well the child learnt their first language
- the support provided by those using the new language
- the attitudes of others towards the child's language and culture
- the extent to which the child becomes involved in the language environment.

A child learning an additional language must accomplish the following:
Develop a new set of sounds and sound groupings.
Create new intonation patterns so that their meanings are understood.
Recognise a new alphabet or script.
Develop a new set of sound symbol relationships.
Establish a new vocabulary.
Learn new ways of putting words together and organising information in the expected sequence.
Identify the new social rules for when to speak and what to say.
Experience new sets of culturally specific knowledge and behaviour.

There are some normal patterns of language use to expect in additional language learners:

- A silent period: This is a time when the child says very little, sometimes for a long period of time, maybe even months. During this time, the child is listening, watching and building their knowledge of the new language before they use it. If this occurs, you should:
  - continue talking even if the child does not respond
  - continue to include the child in small group activities
  - use varied questions
  - include other children as the focus of any conversation
  - use the known language in activities if possible
  - accept non-verbal responses
  - encourage any effort made
  - expect a response
  - provide activities with repetitive words and/or counting for success
  - use new and known languages in one sentence to provide meaning and fill gaps (known as code mixing).
- Loss of the initial language: If the language is not used, respected and nurtured, the child will lose their skills in this language. This may be damaging to the child's self-image or it may occur because they feel like they do not belong.
- Numerous grammatical errors: This occurs as the child learns the new language rules.

Introducing new languages

Including a variety of languages in the curriculum helps children to develop a healthy self-esteem, self-concept and self-image as you show them that all language is valued.

New languages offer an opportunity to learn new skills, find out about the world, and develop interest and respect for the cultures and backgrounds of others.

It's a good idea to display words in different languages.

To introduce a new language to children, go slowly and do the following:

- Expose the child to the new language: If a child who does not speak English attends an English-speaking service, this will occur naturally. If an English-speaking child is to learn another language, provide songs, stories and communication in that language.
- Teach one word or phrase at a time.
- Point out an object and identify it using both languages. Give the child time to think about this and practise it.
- Have realistic expectations: Children will not learn a new language if you overwhelm them or if they are not exposed to the new language consistently.
- Provide positive reinforcement.

You can ask families or others who use the language to help you.

Example

Playing a game using two languages

To support language development, Kristy introduced the game 'Who am I?'

A child with a Spanish language heritage was asked to respond in English saying, 'I am Paolo'.

To support new language development, Kristy asked all English-speaking children to use Spanish, saying, for example, 'Mi nombre es Max'.

Planned group experiences

Language and literacy experiences that involve resources and props are stimulating for children.

These enriched experiences create curiosity, and encourage children to be involved and want to learn.

Group time provides many opportunities for sharing and experiencing language and literacy, while also supporting the children's ability to listen, participate and respond.

Suggestions to encourage children to become engaged in experiences:
➤ Use a variety of media in discussions, such as magazines, videos, music, books and posters.
➤ Respond to all children's conversations and follow up on them.
➤ Plan experiences related to children's interests.
➤ Plan a variety of experiences involving music, movement, stories and directions.
➤ Ensure all children can see the activity.
➤ Project your voice so everyone can clearly hear you.
➤ Use props such as puppets, felt board stories, toys, dolls and mobiles.
➤ Ask open-ended questions.
➤ Provide new equipment for children to explore, such as headphones and microphones.

Reading stories

Reading and storytelling help children develop listening and communication skills.

Reading books to children is one of the most valuable tools in developing children's language. The children's section of any library will have a wide range of high-quality books – every child should easily be able to choose a book that appeals to them.

Reading stories to children helps them develop their listening and communication skills.

Story reading can be used in group situations or as a one-on-one activity. Reading stories with children offers opportunities for learning about the world as well as for developing language skills. Many children's books are informative and may answer questions that children have. They can teach children about animal lifecycles, colours, insects, planets, families, peers, diversity and many other worthwhile subjects. Other books offer the opportunity for children to relax and have fun.

To choose age-appropriate stories, make sure:

- the content is age-appropriate by ensuring that books for:
  - infants have simple pictures and words
  - toddlers have short stories
  - preschoolers have more complex stories, and may be rhythmic, interactive or relate to life experiences
- the story is appealing and not too complicated or too long
- the illustrations are attractive and interesting.

Storytelling

Storytelling is the art of sharing ideas, as well as old and often valued traditions through the spoken word.

It allows the storyteller to share precious memories and traditions, encourages children's imaginations and helps create bonds between people of all ages.

When stories are well told, they encourage children to listen with such concentration that individual mental images will be formed, rather than the prescribed image a picture book presents. Storytelling, like reading, can occur at any time and with children of any age.

Resources for stories can come from story collections, picture books and movies. Older people recalling their childhood days can also be of great interest to preschool children.

Consider the following points when deciding what stories to tell children.

Stories about the child	Children from the youngest age love to hear stories about themselves, so they can recall events and even be part of the story.
Stories about the immediate environment	Infants and toddlers relate to stories about their immediate environment and things that they know, such as their toys and friends.
Stories about imaginary adventures	Preschoolers enjoy stories that include them going on imaginary adventures, and enjoy an element of suspense.
Stories about familiar and new songs	Songs take on a new meaning when they are expanded by storytelling; for example, children love to hear what the little ducks were doing when they refused to come back in 'Five little ducks'.

Storytelling skills

A storyteller should be enthusiastic about the story and should want to tell it.

An effective storyteller will memorise and practise the story before telling it to the children or might make up a story on the spot as events or ideas occur. Starting with familiar stories like The gingerbread man is a good way to gain confidence in storytelling. The more you practise, the better you will be at engaging the audience.

The following are some hints for telling stories well.

Make eye contact	Maintain eye contact with the children as you tell the story. Use emphasised expressions.
Monitor the interest level	Monitor the interest level of the children as you are speaking. If they are losing interest, raise the level of your expression, involve the children or end the story.
Use vocalisations	Use tone, pitch, volume and speed to dramatise the text.
Use props	Use props to maintain children's interest and involve the audience.
Include chants	Have children repeat chants with you; for example, 'Run, run, as fast as you can; you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man'. Participation encourages children to make up their own stories to tell.
Be physical	Move around, use your arms and imitate what would happen in the story.

Posters and displays

Posters and displays provide opportunities for discussion and can link children to new topics or an understanding of others.

Assess posters and displays using the following guidelines:

- Are different cultures represented using present-day clothing and environments or are they only presented in a historical context?
- Are different cultures represented positively and without bias, or are some people presented negatively?
- Do a variety of people contribute to a variety of activities or do only some people contribute?
- Does each person have an individual appearance or does everyone look similar?
- Is a range of emotions and abilities shown or is everyone happy?
- Do various people take on various roles or do only some people contribute?
- Is a range of talents and skills displayed?
- Are talents and skills demonstrated by non-gender stereotypes or are gender stereotypes displayed?
- Is a variety of people represented or is one group of people represented a lot more than others?

When posters and displays are balanced, they will allow children to see inclusion immediately and to form ideas about difference and similarity themselves and with supported conversation with educators.

While this criteria offers inclusive demonstrations of the world, posters and displays that are restrictive in content can also be useful for guided discussions. Use the materials with support to clarify your points and support children's understanding and acceptance.

Example

Using posters to challenge stereotypes



Fran used the posters above to challenge stereotypes within the group. She asked each of the children to tell her about how their family was similar to one of the posters and then how it was different to a poster. This started conversations about race, family members, roles and names. Children then drew their own families, created a family wall and created groupings based on families. Some children talked about country of heritage. Over the next week this evolved into collections of flags and writing country names, locating them on maps and developing a mural with pictures of towns and cities.

Action rhymes, poetry and finger plays

Action rhymes and finger plays involve a chant, song or poem that is accompanied by actions.

They challenge memory and recall as well as physical skills, as the body and mind work together to act out the activity. Most children find these engaging and fun as the words can be musical, funny, nonsensical or patterned, and encourage movement.

Action rhymes and finger plays can be valuable tools for settling a group session or as part of a dispersal process. They are good for keeping the group or an individual child involved during unexpected waiting times.

Rhymes and poetry play an integral role in the provision of exciting language experiences; they develop children's understanding of words and their sounds.

You may choose to write and develop your own poems or rhymes for children that support knowledge and provide entertainment.

There are many different types of poems, including those in the following table.

Acrostic poem	In an acrostic poem, the first letter of each line forms a word vertically (running down the page). The word the poem forms is usually the focus of the poem, such as a person's name.
Ballad	A ballad is a poem that tells a story about an event. The event may be from history, the news or someone's life. Ballads are usually rhyming poems and are commonly used by poets to recall significant historic events. However, you may write a lighter version about a birthday party or teddy bear picnic.

Haiku	This is a form of poetry originating in Japan. Haikus focus on what you see or feel. They have three lines: the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables and the last line has five syllables.
Limerick	A limerick is a rhyming poem that consists of five lines. The last words of the first two lines rhyme, both with each other and with the final word of the poem. The last words of the other two lines rhyme only with each other. Limericks also have a strong rhythm and are often humorous.
Rhyming poems	Couplets are two-line poems where the last word of each line rhymes. Triplets are three-line poems with two alternatives of rhyming patterns; either all lines of the triplet rhyme or just the first and last line rhyme. Quatrains are four-line poems with two alternatives of rhyming patterns; either every second line rhymes or the first two lines rhyme with each other, as do the last two.

Puppets and felt stories

Puppets and felt stories help to enrich a child's enjoyment in a storytelling or language experience as they add a visual aspect.

They are a great extension for group time sessions and a valuable individual experience as children can act out their own stories with the puppets or felt characters, developing their use of language.

Older children can make their own puppets and felt characters, and even develop their own puppet shows. They may also be able to use puppets to express their feelings, concerns or ideas.

The following table guides you to choose age-appropriate puppets.

Age group	Characteristics
Infants and toddlers	➤ Safe when explored with the senses ➤ No small pieces ➤ Aspects easily manipulated by small fingers ➤ Relate to areas of interest, such as animals and faces ➤ Not too loud
Preschoolers	➤ Can be self-made and individual ➤ Can be open-ended ➤ Relate to stories, rhymes and finger plays ➤ Can be used in plays, stories and theatres

Practice Task 13

1. Draw a line to match each term about literacy-rich environments to its definition.

* Storytelling	* Can be completed alone or in groups, and allows children to learn about the world and develop language skills through images and content.
* Finger plays, action rhymes and poetry	* Involves the sharing of ideas, imagination and traditions through the spoken word, and should be enthusiastic.
* Reading	* Allow children to listen and respond to a variety of language and literacy experiences through props, songs and books.
* Group experiences	* Challenge children to listen, remember and respond to actions, meaning their body and mind need to work together. This also helps a child's understanding of words and sounds.

2. Which of the following statements relate to how educators should include culture and languages other than English in the service? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Literacy-rich environments will include a variety of texts in different languages.
- ☐ A child's home language should be valued, encouraged and incorporated into the curriculum, both in written and verbal form.
- ☐ Educators should choose carefully when selecting a new language to teach children. The children will find learning additional languages extremely challenging.
- ☐ New languages should be taught slowly through exposure, practice and positive reinforcement.
- ☐ Posters and images should represent diversity to help children see inclusion. Those that show stereotypes can be used as a learning opportunity.

3D Self-esteem and identity

Self-esteem is the feeling of confidence in one's own ability.

Identity is about who you are and how you believe you fit into the world. A child with high self-esteem generally wants to attempt new play activities and will feel satisfaction by participating in play. They generally enjoy a stronger sense of identity because they feel that they are valued and hold an important role in the lives of people that are meaningful to them.

Children with high self-esteem have a strong sense of identity and confidence in themselves.

A child with low self-esteem is generally less enthusiastic, avoiding new play activities and feeling frustration if challenges in play are posed. Their sense of identity is low, as they are not sure where they fit into the lives of others, and may not feel their needs are important or that others are interested in seeing them succeed.

Sense of belonging

Children are less likely to explore, experiment and ask questions if they are insecure, unsure of their position in the group and concerned about what will happen next.

Play, a medium for learning, is less likely to occur spontaneously unless a child feels a sense of belonging.

Each child requires something different to help them feel that they belong; you will need to discover this through orientation processes, discussion with families and finding out about the child.

Your positive relationships with children support them to develop a sense of belonging, which will in turn help their self-esteem and identity to flourish. The following strategies help to create this positive relationship:

- Hold infants as frequently as possible in a relaxed and comfortable way.
- Respond quickly to cries and cues. Children who learn that their needs will be met from an early age quickly learn to feel secure.
- Provide children with opportunities to explore the environment independently while you are nearby; this encourages a feeling of security when they are away from you.
- Help children understand the pattern of the day; for example, by telling them what is happening next.
- Use routine opportunities such as dressing for one-on-one interactions.
- Make the child feel important throughout the day.
- Talk with children if you are unable to hold or be near them, and use singing, poems and rhymes as a way to comfort children.
- Provide an approach and expectations that are consistent and attempt to maintain consistency in the child's educators.
- Interact and work with children at their eye level.

Influencing self-esteem

A child who is encouraged, supported and provided opportunities to play and be independent is learning to feel self-confidence.

A child who is questioned, overshadowed and provided limited opportunities to be independent or play is receiving a message that they are incapable, and they will have little confidence in their abilities as a result. These reactions in young children are learnt through experience.

Take the following steps to positively influence a child's self-esteem:
➤ Give individual attention to each child and provide opportunities for children to be independent.
➤ Encourage children to attempt skills and activities both as individuals and as part of a group.
➤ Provide children with positive feedback.
➤ Support children to be clear communicators and considerate of others.
➤ Acknowledge children when they help you or others.
➤ Encourage realistic ideas of others by providing materials, equipment, activities and models that show diversity.
➤ Prohibit put-downs, avoid comparisons and competition, and accept mistakes as learning opportunities.
➤ Be genuine in your interactions with individual children and groups.
➤ Allow children to make decisions, problem-solve and negotiate as individuals and as part of a group.
➤ Provide age- and stage-appropriate activities, equipment and expectations.
➤ Identify and celebrate the social, emotional and psychological successes of individuals and groups.

To demonstrate your respect for children:

- greet and farewell every child
- use children's names often
- respect children's names by using them correctly
- be affectionate, but avoid terms like 'darling' or 'sweetie'
- never give children nicknames unless these are provided by families as the name the child is known by; in particular, never use negative nicknames.

Communicating clearly

When encouraging children, active listening and open questioning are important aspects of clear communication and respectful acknowledgment.

The following table provides an outline of both.

Aspect	Explanation	Examples
Active listening	➤ Requires you to acknowledge, encourage, clarify, restate and reflect what you hear to allow the child to identify that their message is being received by you appropriately. ➤ Active listening uses body language and verbal communication.	➤ Body language through facing the child, using eye contact and using facial expressions that match the message show that you are open to communication. ➤ Verbal communication involves short responses that either reflect what you hear (e.g. 'So you mean …'), demonstrate you are listening (e.g. 'I see') or acknowledge feelings (e.g. 'You seem angry').
Questioning	➤ Closed questions encourage a one-word answer that does not reveal details. ➤ Open questions encourage an explanation or some description, details or views.	➤ Closed questions are useful for testing your understanding of another person's discussion, concluding a discussion or making a decision, e.g. 'Did you notice that?' ➤ Open questions are useful for developing conversation and finding out information, e.g. 'What did you think of that?'

Responding to needs

By responding to children's needs you start to build relationships with them and show them that you care.

When children are playing, involve yourself sensitively in their play and listen carefully, giving your full attention. During routines, encourage children to take their time, try new skills and practise skills they are learning.

Infants need to:

- be responded to
- have their non-verbal communication understood and catered for
- cry and be attended to.

Toddlers need to:

- express themselves through activities
- express themselves verbally
- name their feelings.

Preschoolers need to:

- express themselves through activities, such as clapping and stamping
- express their feelings verbally
- express their feelings through paintings, drawings and other creative activities.

Example

Listening to children

Harrison and Sam (both four years) are talking with Jenna, an educator, about shopping for groceries. Harrison talks about how his mum goes to the local market as the food is fresher there. Sam talks about how his family goes to the supermarket and how they take their own shopping bags so they don't have to use plastic ones.

While the children are talking, Jenna sits at their eye level, restates what they are saying, adds her own experiences of shopping and also asks questions such as, 'What would your mum do if there were no apples at the market?'

Acknowledging children

Acknowledgment shows children that you value them and recognise their efforts.

How and when you acknowledge children's efforts affects how they feel about themselves and can foster feelings of positive self-esteem.

To provide healthy acknowledgment:
➤ Teach children to evaluate their own efforts by saying things like, 'Was that fun?', 'You seemed to enjoy that' or 'What do you think about what you have achieved?'
➤ Never use acknowledgment to compare children or make it seem like the child must meet your standards.
➤ Focus on the process rather than the product. This means that you pay attention to the time and effort applied rather than the outcome achieved. Do this by saying things like: 'You must have planned well to achieve that', 'You worked really hard on that' or 'How many materials did you use?'
➤ Keep it private. Do not make an example of children. Healthy acknowledgment is used to show value to the individual, not to show others' weaknesses or demonstrate how things should be done. You might say, 'Thanks for helping out' or 'I appreciate you putting all those puzzles back together'.

Example

Focusing on the process

Daniel is drawing with crayons at a table when Christine, an educator, approaches and sits at the same table. Christine has noticed Daniel working at the table for some time. As she sits down, she asks, 'What have you been working so hard on, Daniel?'

Daniel is proud – he has drawn a horse. Christine can see that although the horse is not perfectly formed, it is one of Daniel's most detailed drawings. She asks him if he is pleased and then comments that she really likes the way the horse's tail is flying out. Christine asks if Daniel would like to display the work or if he wants to take it home tonight.

When Christine comments on Daniel's drawing, Daniel's feelings of success are acknowledged and his self-esteem increases.

Including all children

Some children are quiet achievers; they may not be demanding or they may have positive behaviour and continue work without expectation that you will acknowledge or support them.

In a busy education and care service, these children may be less represented as a focus of planning. They may seem to have a positive self-esteem, but may not feel like they fit in with the group or may feel they are unworthy of attention. Spend time with and acknowledge the work of all children, regardless of their temperament.

In addition to spending time with all children and interacting in ways that demonstrate all children are worthwhile, Bandura's social learning theory suggests the following strategies for children who have low self-esteem:

- Help the child to develop an accurate picture of their abilities and behaviour.
- Redirect a child's inaccurate or confused beliefs about themselves.

Accurate self-picture

Help a child develop an accurate picture of themselves, their abilities and their behaviour through encouragement.

You should demonstrate that their abilities are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Talk positively about the child's work and provide measures appropriate to the child's stage of development.

The following table sets out some strategies for helping a child to develop an accurate picture of themselves.

Measure children against their own achievements	By measuring against themselves, rather than against others, children can see improvement in their own performance and think about factors such as how much enjoyment they experience during activities.
Rotate games	Rotate games so that skilled players are not always central. All players should assume an important role in an activity. This may mean changing the rules or developing a new game from an old one.
Keep expectations realistic	Make sure your expectations or challenges are not too high, or you will set children up to fail. Similarly, if you set the standards too low, they will be meaningless. You can get the balance right if you monitor the children regularly so you are aware of their skill level.
Scaffold skills to support challenging experiences	If a child is able to do something with support, you can respond to this by scaffolding their skills and providing appropriate challenges. If a child is not in the zone of proximal development or you have not noticed an opportunity, you may be setting up the child to fail or become frustrated.
Encourage children to reward themselves	Encourage children to reward themselves and discourage negative self-talk. Support children to do this by giving them words to use and telling them what you think as well. Celebrate achievements and help children see that mistakes are simply ways to learn.

Redirecting beliefs

Explore and support positive self-image by redirecting a child's inaccurate or confused beliefs about themselves.

Usually these beliefs occur when the child makes generalisations about their abilities, personal appearance or anything else they feel is important. This may occur when a child believes they should think, feel or act in a particular way. Children are provided messages about these things constantly as they hear or see others being praised or encouraged. They may also see images of what a boy or girl should be like or how a certain culture should behave or look.

In cases where a child's self-image is confused or inaccurate, your interaction and the experiences you provide can help the child separate their abilities from their insecurities.

To improve a child's self-image, you can do the following:

- Discuss things you know about the child that might reduce their insecurities.
- Demonstrate that the child's insecurities are false by showing them their previous work.
- Provide images or experiences that demonstrate that gender and culture do not determine likes and dislikes or personality.
- Invite people to share their experiences, knowledge and interests.
- Ensure the child is provided with attention and affection.
- Create opportunities for the child to participate positively in the area they are concerned about.
- Discuss or introduce strategies that help the child become more skilled in an area of weakness.
- Celebrate areas of interest, ability and enjoyment.
- Limit competitive games and activities, as these boost the winner's self-esteem, and highlight weaknesses and failures of other participants.
- Pair the child with others that complement their skills or place the child in a position where their skills or abilities are valuable.

These types of activities, along with your positive and supporting interactions, allow the child to reassess their feelings and self-perceptions. They also provide opportunities for the child to build on and extend their achievements.

Self-esteem and self-concept are often developed indirectly as a child is provided with experiences that are successful and rewarding, meet their individual interests and strengths, and provide for success.

Outcome 1 of the EYLF: Children have a strong sense of identity, emphasises the importance of self-esteem and identity. Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world, considers the child's feelings of belonging in their world. These promote the child's emotional wellbeing as a foundation for success in all other areas of their learning, which closely resembles a humanistic view.

Example

Improving self-image

Ruby has a skin condition where patches of skin lose pigment. She had a patch on the inside of her elbow and hid this by always insisting she wear a cardigan or long-sleeve shirt. Ruby's family and educators encouraged Ruby to accept her condition. Her mum told her she loved the 'spot' as it made her Ruby. Her sister suggested that the shape of the patch looked like a unicorn, Ruby's favourite animal.

Over time, Ruby become more confident and began to wear short sleeves. When children asked about her skin, Ruby would reply, 'It's my spot', and go on to play with no concern.

Individual strengths

An indicator of success is when a child is pleased with something they have achieved.

This may be a simple task or activity they have participated in or completed, or it may be connected to a relationship they have with another child or adult. Many children feel an increase in self-esteem from achievement, but most will gain further positive feelings if they are acknowledged by another person.

Open-ended play allows children to decide how it will challenge their strengths. Each player participates at a level appropriate to themselves. Adults can support individual learning through play by providing activities suited to children's interests and abilities. Children's play should not be onerous; it should allow children to feel and experience achievement in a positive manner.

When children are experiencing an achievement, you may notice the following things.

What they may say	What cues they may give	What you can do
➤ 'Look what I have done.' ➤ 'We did it.' ➤ 'I did it myself.'	➤ Smiling ➤ Finishing and sharing their work ➤ Wanting to do the activity again ➤ Telling others	➤ Comment on the process or skill involved ➤ Ask how the activity was done ➤ Offer tasks of a similar skill level or interest

Focus acknowledgment and encouragement on the effort or process a child displayed, and aim to help the child feel good about themselves. This will help to develop positive self-esteem by showing children that you value them and their efforts, and encouraging them to be motivated to do things for intrinsic reasons, rather than for an extrinsic reward or recognition.

There is a range of ways you can demonstrate acknowledgment and encouragement, both during and after an event, including the following:

- Provide feedback on the child's work by commenting on the effort they have made, the structure or colour, the materials and equipment used or what parts you are particularly interested in or attracted to.
- Ask questions that demonstrate your interest and appreciation, such as: 'How did you do that?', 'What materials did you use?' or 'What do you think of your work?'
- Thank children for their contribution by commenting using basic manners; for example, saying 'please' and 'thank you'.

Independence

Self-help skills are actions used every day to complete tasks that assist with your own and others' care.

They allow children to take responsibility for themselves and take on jobs that contribute to success. This in turn increases their self-esteem and their sense of identity.

A child must feel independent and autonomous to attempt and succeed at self-help skills. They also feel more independent and autonomous when they are completing self-help skills. In this way, a positive cycle exists, very much like positive reinforcement in behaviourist theory.

You can support children's independence, autonomy and self-help skills if you demonstrate actions and responses such as the following.

Have realistic expectations	➢ Infants may not be able to feed themselves, but they may be able to hold a spoon and attempt to pick up food. ➢ Older children may be able to feed pet fish, but they maynot be able to remember to do this every day.
Show children that you have confidence in them	➢ Tell children you know they can do it.
Provide opportunities for children to do things for themselves	➢ Create routines and timetables that include tasks for children. ➢ Assume children will complete tasks themselves and ask if they need help.
Give warnings	➢ Tell children about an upcoming change so they can prepare and complete what they are doing; for example, 'In two minutes we are going to pack up' or 'After you finish this puzzle, we will prepare the snack table'.
Offer children choices	➢ Provide options that are realistic and within the child's range of abilities. ➢ Do not provide too many choices. ➢ Create routines and timetables where choice is expected; for example, 'Would you like to set the table or serve the food?'
Ensure routines and care are child-centred	➢ Set timetables that provide opportunities for children to complete self-help tasks themselves; for example, dressing, undressing and feeding. ➢ Create routines and timetables that allow the child to feel they are not being rushed. ➢ Display a positive and encouraging attitude; for example, 'That's alright, Helen. Take your time and try again', rather than 'Hurry up, Helen, it's time for a snack!'

Make it fun	➤ Clap, cheer or give a high five when a child succeeds. ➤ Invent games related to daily tasks; for example, imitate a front-end loader when packing up toys. ➤ Link tasks with upbeat music; for example, a fast-marching beat could mean it is time to pack up. The children will be motivated by the sounds and speed of the music.
Give positive feedback	➤ Reflect on the process (how the child did a task), rather than the product (result) by saying things like, 'You worked for ages on that!' or 'What a lot of pieces you put together!'
Give reasons	➤ Demonstrate the usefulness of self-help tasks by explaining their benefit; for example, say, 'When you pull off your own socks, you don't have to wait for me' or 'The LEGO won't get broken if we pack it away when we're finished'.

Cultural identity

Consider the impact of cultural influences and how these affect a child's attitudes and application of different concepts.

Some examples include:

- the types of games they play
- toys they own or enjoy
- responsibilities they have at home
- events and celebrations they participate in or are exposed to
- how they are involved in family decision-making
- access to a tablet, computer or electronic games.

Children enjoy learning about others through interacting with their culture, which provides the opportunity for you to introduce many new ideas and to involve children in discussions, play and games related to finding out how they are similar to and different from others.

Cultural priorities such as education, play, language, rituals and religious beliefs all affect the way you present your curriculum, how you communicate to others and what priorities you place on various interaction and planning aspects. The same cultural priorities affect the types of play and interaction that children engage in.

Strategies to support children to learn about and accept cultural influences:

- Set up situations where children share skills and knowledge, or support each other to achieve a goal.
- Create a play environment that reflects many different people and ways of living; for example, by adding cultural items to dramatic play; including music or pictures of people from various cultures; inviting visitors to participate as volunteers or guests; or including aspects of each child's culture.
- Arrange a play setting that promotes participation of boys and girls, children with disabilities and children of various cultural backgrounds.
- Challenge any behaviour that alerts you to negative attitudes that may be developing in children; for example, if a child refuses to include another child in play due to their appearance, you should deal with this situation sensitively through discussion.
- Identify similarities and differences, and encourage a child who is being discriminated against to develop their own strategies for response.
- Highlight differences in opinion, ideas and goals, and encourage children to explore these – discuss these things as they arise by saying, 'Isn't it interesting that you both have different ideas?'
- Encourage positive and effective interactions between children by modelling and guiding.
- Involve parents in any issues that centre on children's play.

There are many factors that make up the elements of a particular culture; some are easy to see, while others are harder to recognise. Knowledge of these factors will assist you in developing trusting and non-discriminatory relationships and help you to meet the needs of children, families and colleagues.

Example

Sharing cultural identity

In the home corner the educators have placed a pair of chopsticks. These items are added to the regular items, such as pots and pans, dolls, dress-ups, plates, cups and cutlery. An educator, Susan, remains close by the area most of the morning so she can listen and observe the children.

Susan enters the area and notices that a child doesn't know what the chopsticks are. Susan explains that they are used instead of a knife and fork to eat food and that if you go to an Asian restaurant you may see them there. She also explains that Ling (a girl of Chinese heritage) uses chopsticks to eat at home and may be able to demonstrate how to use them.

Celebrations

There are many occasions for celebration, and the variety you offer may depend on the cultural mix of families.

By including cultural and religious celebrations, community or family celebrations, you provide a variety of social experiences and acknowledge that diversity is valued and respected. In addition, you are widening your own view of the world and its people to gain a better understanding of how to approach your role. These actions fit well with the ecological approach of Urie Bronfenbrenner.

A sense of community comes from the experiences people share, so the inclusion of celebrations is an effective way to promote this. Celebrations can be exciting, personal or varied in their learning content, and may involve new and unusual items and content to explore. They can help children to develop respect for others, their views and opinions. Celebrations are part of most people's lives, so children and their family members can all be involved.

Look online and ask families to let you know when various celebrations occur. Consider what learning experiences you could link to them.

Example

Finding out about family celebrations

Emily and Tom are both turning two on the weekend. The educators ask each family if they are planning a celebration.

Emily's family plans to have a party where they will:

- invite all the children in Emily's room
- invite all of Emily's relatives and friends
- have a barbecue in the evening
- hire a jumping castle and a clown
- have a large store-made cake with sparklers and sing 'Happy birthday' in Dutch.

Tom's family plans to:

- invite a friend from play group over to play
- have some finger food for lunch
- have cupcakes with candles and sing 'Happy birthday'.

Each family is excited about the birthday celebrations and feel that they are providing an age-appropriate and culturally suited celebration.

Practice Task 14

1. List four strategies an educator might use to help develop a child's sense of belonging.

2. Which of the following statements are correct about building self-esteem and identity? Select all that apply.

- ☐ A child with high self-esteem will feel valued, included and supported, and will be more likely to participate in new play activities.
- ☐ Children's need for belonging and inclusion are different. Educators need to spend time with all children, redirect inaccurate self-beliefs and ensure their culture is included.
- ☐ A child's individual strengths, efforts and achievements should be celebrated and acknowledged to develop self-esteem through feeling valued and supported.
- ☐ Self-esteem and identity increase when a child is allowed to take responsibly and contribute to their own success through their self-help skills.
- ☐ A quiet child with positive behaviour and high self-esteem will not require attention, acknowledgement and support as they are comfortable with their identity and should be encouraged to extend their skills themselves.

3E Recognising emotions

Emotions may be positive (for example, happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, empathy and curiosity) or negative (for example, grief, fear, hatred, shame and anger).

Emotions can be expressed through verbal interaction and body language, including the use of body movements, gestures or facial expressions. Infants may communicate through different cries.

Children express emotions differently and for different reasons.

Every child experiences emotions to different degrees and may even experience different emotions relating to the same event. Some emotions are used as cues to communicate messages. Sometimes cultural or individual circumstances may cause a child to display cues you do not understand. It will take some time for you to get to know each child and to understand how they communicate their feelings.

Encouraging resilience

Resilience is about being able to overcome difficult situations or challenges. The ability to be resilient increases a child's self-esteem.

Resilience might also be described as:

- giving things a go
- trying your best
- being strong inside
- standing up for yourself
- shrugging it off.

While some of these descriptions may imply that the person is ignoring a negative situation, resilience recognises challenges and aims to overcome them. With that in mind, both educators and children require resilience.

Resilience is about controlling the messages you say to yourself and changing them so that your actions are more considered, on-track and beneficial to your wellbeing. When children develop their resilience, they are better able to deal with challenges, know what to do when something goes wrong and to gather their emotions and use them in positive ways.

You can help children with the development of resilience by encouraging and leading them to do the following:

- Think positively and accept that sometimes negative things happen.
- Look after themselves by talking about their feelings, working out what makes them feel calm, identifying strategies for reducing stress or relaxing and asking for help when needed.

- Set and try to achieve goals, then keep trying until they are achieved – even if they need to work overtime, step-by-step.
- Accept that we all need to learn and that it takes time; we make mistakes and learn from these.
- Learn to problem-solve and work out how to improve things, work through things and enjoy challenges that involve problem-solving.

These skills become possible when the child becomes self-aware. Self-awareness is developed through identifying their own:

- limits – what they are good at, what is challenging, what is enjoyable, what is annoying, what makes them happy
- priorities – what is important to them, what their goals are, what they need
- reflections – what has been successful or unsuccessful in the past, and whether there is anything that they would like to change.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation refers to the ability to cope with various levels of stress.

When people are stressed, their brains naturally react, often referred to as fight, flight or freeze reactions. Some actions you might notice children displaying when they are stressed include the following:

- Fight: kicking, screaming, spitting, pushing, throwing things, punching, banging their head or self-harming
- Flight: becoming restless, running away, hiding, fidgeting, being wary, whining
- Freeze: holding breath, pounding heart, shutting down, feeling numb, not reacting, daydreaming, being unable to respond

These reactions occur when the stress being felt creates an uncontrollable action. When children learn to self-regulate, it means that they are increasing their ability to recognise stress and to do things to reduce stress before it becomes unmanageable.

Excessive stress might occur due to situations that are perceived to be harmful or dangerous, overwhelming or extreme. This may include:

- not understanding a situation or event
- feeling unsupported and alone
- not having the support they need
- losing possession of something important to them
- not knowing where people important to them are
- not feeling heard or understood
- being overwhelmed by sensory information such as loud noises, heat or cold, being too close to others, and not having their own space.

Responding to emotions

Your response to emotions and your demonstration of empathy is crucial; the way you respond can have a long-lasting effect on a child's self-esteem. Once you understand the messages a child is trying to communicate about their feelings and ideas, you need to respond promptly to build relationships with children and show them that you care.

Play experiences provide children with an excellent outlet for expressing emotions. You can watch children at play and gain insight into the emotions they may be playing out.

The following play experiences provide children with opportunities to express their emotions.

Play experience	Examples	Value
Dramatic play	➢ Dress-ups ➢ Home furniture and equipment ➢ Dolls house ➢ Car mat ➢ Models and miniatures	➢ Acting out events or situations ➢ Putting themselves in someone else's shoes ➢ Releasing their feelings
Drawing or painting	➢ Pencils ➢ Crayons ➢ Collage	➢ Non-verbal expression
Tactile or manipulative play	➢ Messy play ➢ Water play ➢ Sand ➢ Clay ➢ Mud ➢ Hammering	➢ Calming ➢ Releasing emotions (pounding, squishing, banging)
Storytelling	➢ Props ➢ Puppets ➢ Books	➢ Indirect expression
Music and movement	➢ Dancing ➢ Swaying ➢ Marching ➢ Stomping	➢ Non-threatening physical expression
Playground equipment	➢ Swings ➢ Rockers	➢ Relaxation movement ➢ Feeling of freedom

Every child requires time and understanding. A child who seeks attention and does not receive it, may feel unworthy of love or become destructive in order to receive attention, as some children feel that negative attention is better than no attention at all.

Consequences and feelings

The ideas that children express often relate to their feelings.

Feelings are the consequence or outcome of occurrences and/or interactions. It is useful for children to label these feelings so they become familiar with them and consider how they have occurred. This means that they will be identifying what the emotional consequence of behaviour or another action feels like. If children gain in-depth knowledge of their feelings, they will be able to recognise these sooner and manage them appropriately.

You can help children to see that actions and choices create consequential feelings by reminding them of this; for example, asking, 'Miguel, how does it feel to achieve that?' or 'How does it feel when your idea works differently to what you expect?'

Some common feelings that children may experience are described in the following table.

Excitement	This may be the consequence of positive outcomes, such as an experiment working, a hypothesis being proven or a construction being successful. Many young children lose control of this positive emotion and can become overexcited or extremely reactive.
Anger	Each child will express anger differently and sometimes the appropriate expression is difficult to identify. Nonetheless, children need to be aware that anger must be expressed in a way that does not hurt others or the environment. Children may feel anger if others interfere with their ideas or a hypothesis turns out to be incorrect.
Frustration	This is a difficult feeling for children to identify. Often it has a very similar response to anger. Children need to recognise when they feel anger or frustration and understand why, as the origin will most likely assist in redirection of the frustration. Frustration may occur if the child cannot come up with a hypothesis they agree with, if the experiment or construction activity is beyond their ability, or if their materials or equipment are not suitable.

Managing feelings

A huge amount of development in all areas is needed to manage feelings in a controlled and acceptable way.

Some strategies you can help children use and how these link to skills are outlined in the following table.

Strategy	Example	Skills
Acknowledge feelings that the child seems to be experiencing.	'You seem very frustrated.'	➢ Language is used; this is a skill that requires symbolic thought. ➢ The child needs to develop understanding of the feeling and outcome.
Discuss how the child feels.	'Tell me how it feels to be frustrated.'	➢ The child must consider their feelings and problem-solve, then make a decision on what they really feel. ➢ Various feelings must be identified and recognised.

Strategy	Example	Skills
Link the feeling to the event if appropriate.	'Tell me why you feel this way.'	➤ This is a challenge to encourage logical thought; there is not always a logical explanation.
Use the event to put the feeling into context.	'If the puzzle makes you feel this way, maybe this is not the right puzzle for you. Why don't you try a different one?'	➤ Decision-making and problem-solving skills are used.
Redirect inappropriate actions to a more appropriate one.	'It is okay to feel frustrated, but it is not okay to throw the puzzle. When you feel frustrated, maybe you need to take a break or come and tell me about it.'	➤ The child alters their behaviour using new information. ➤ The child uses language or thoughts when overwhelmed. ➤ New ideas need to be understood, implemented and practised.

Negative feelings

Emotional outbursts are common for some children; these may reflect anger, fear or frustration, sadness or joy.

Sometimes children are placed in situations that impact their emotional state as well as other developmental areas. These situations include:

- ill health, or long periods of hospitalisation of the child or a family member
- changes in family circumstances and relationships
- accidents or embarrassing events that may occur
- separation from familiar people and places
- difficult interactions with other children
- moving house or migrating
- the death of a family member or pet.

Children may experience emotional outbursts for a number of reasons.

The most common negative feelings experienced by children are caused by:

- accidents
- other children
- the loss of a toy
- embarrassment
- the environment being too noisy, crowded, large, busy, quiet or uninteresting
- not being listened to or understood.

Anger

Children's outbursts can be frightening and even dangerous, and these may demonstrate that the child is not in control of their feelings or capable of expressing themselves safely.

Many issues concerning children's feelings are a result of them not understanding their emotions, not knowing that feelings are normal or dealing with feelings in inappropriate ways. Anger is an example of this.

Your ability to deal with children's emotional outbursts relies on your ability to remain calm. Your actions should be consistent and you should be open to comforting upset children even if they seem difficult to get close to.

Different children respond to different methods of calming. For example, some children need:

- quiet time away from others in a safe space (not isolated or made to stay there)
- to be close to an adult they trust
- to express themselves to someone who is prepared to listen to what they are saying
- to express their emotions physically.

You can cater for each of these calming methods, but you must also consider the safety of the children. The limits and strategies you provide for the child at this stage will help them throughout their life. It is appropriate for children to become emotional, but it is inappropriate for them to hurt others, damage the environment or attempt to leave your care.

When anger is expressed, you can respond in simple ways:

1. Listen to the child and use body language to show you are listening, by facing the child and getting down to their eye level.
2. Respond with simple comments.
3. Use active listening to highlight specific feelings and to help the child learn what they are feeling; for example, 'You seem angry'.
4. Ask the child what to do next or help them decide by providing materials, equipment or opportunities.
5. Redirect them to the next activity.

Fear

In children, fear often occurs as the result of not understanding a situation or not being prepared for change.

Fear is an emotion that is recognised as a reflex at birth and develops in a child as their brain function increases and their imagination and thought processes become more complex and abstract.

The way fear is managed can affect the security and safety felt by a child, and may also reflect issues a child may be managing. When your routine is stable and predictable, you can reduce fears such as those relating to:

- change
- what may happen next
- what is expected of them
- who will be caring for them
- when certain things may occur.

Experiencing fear is a normal part of emotional development.

Some fears that are common to each age group are listed in the following table.

Age group	Common fears
Infants	Infants show fear of sensory surprises like loud noises and unexpected approaches. This occurs because they are not able to process what is happening and are unable to connect an object or action with a sound. Later, when their brains understand these concepts, they show fear of being separated from familiar people, as they do not understand that the other person continues to exist when they are not seen.
Toddlers	Toddlers often show fear of night-time, darkness and of potentially scary activities. This occurs due to their developing imagination linking with things they are familiar with.
Preschoolers	Preschoolers show fear of imaginary things and often have nightmares. They have vivid imaginations and explore outside their familiar environment. They often become afraid of things they don't understand, sometimes after having overheard an adult conversation they misunderstood.

A range of strategies you may find useful for managing fear are outlined in the following table. As fear is an emotion that affects individuals differently, you will need to vary the strategy you use for different children.

Anticipate fears	Anticipate fears and act to prevent them; if you know a child is afraid of something or someone, you may be able to prepare the child or avoid the fear.
Remove objects that cause fear	Removing objects that cause fear is often a simple task because the child may be afraid of a toy or noise. This strategy may be more difficult if the fear relates to a particular educator, all people with a particular characteristic (for example, males or people with glasses) or the actual room or space.

Prepare children	Prepare children for unpleasant times and events. Children's lives may involve many unpleasant experiences, such as having a blood test, going to hospital or moving rooms. Encourage emotional expression and provide ways for children to find out more about what the experience involves. Be honest and give accurate information. Telling children an experience will not be as bad as it actually is may make them more afraid once the experience occurs.
Age- and stage-appropriate routines	Ensure routines are appropriate for the age and stage of the child, and provide a stable and predictable environment. When routines are not flexible or if materials and messages in the environment do not match a child's needs, they may become fearful or distressed, and negative feelings may become a regular part of the day.

The following plan may be useful if a child expresses uncontrollable fear:

1. Remove the child or the feared object if possible.
2. Get the child's attention. Ask the child to look at you and, if necessary, hold the child's face gently and turn them towards you.
3. Offer the child a security item, such as a favourite toy or blanket they use for comfort. If the child doesn't have a security item, provide something they can use.
4. Comfort the child by talking calmly and quietly and using body language to let them know you care about what they are feeling.
5. Acknowledge the fear by saying, 'I know you are afraid'. Ensure the child knows they are safe with you until the child has calmed down. Don't talk too much; continuing to speak about the fear or reassuring the child continuously may increase their anxiety.
6. Redirect if possible. Encourage the child to move to another area or activity to give them something other than the feared object or situation to think about. This step may not suit all children or be inappropriate if the child is feeling overwhelmed.

When working with older children, it is generally easier to empower them to manage the fear themselves, particularly in the lead-up to an unpleasant event. This is due to their level of understanding and ability to rationalise a situation. Ask them to try:

- humming – this distracts their minds from focusing on the fear
- taking deep breaths – this allows their bodies to slow down and relax
- talking about something else – this distracts them from what is happening
- squeezing a hand or item – this focuses tension and allows the level of fear to be transferred to this action.

Watch for indications of fear management so you can provide the child with the comfort and support they need.

Prosocial behaviour

Prosocial behaviour is about the successful and appropriate manner in which we interact.

It relates to the voluntary behaviour that benefits another person by:

- helping
- sharing
- giving
- comforting
- showing sympathy and kindness
- using positive verbal messages
- using positive physical contact
- showing concern
- understanding the perspective of another person
- cooperating.

Children who are able to share and play together are demonstrating prosocial behaviour.

This helping behaviour is motivated by altruism, which means that any motivation is based on the benefits another person gains and that the person helping is not looking for personal reward or acknowledgment.

When you assist children to develop prosocial behaviour, you are helping them to succeed in friendships, to understand the feelings of others and gain group acceptance. You can do this by helping children to:

- notice and interpret social cues
- generate possible problem-solving strategies
- understand the perspectives of others
- know about social rules and expectations
- remember past experiences and link these to expectations for future experiences.

Ethical investigation

An ethical issue involves morals and understanding what is right and wrong.

Moral development demonstrates how important it is to support children to understand expectations and limits so they can develop lifelong skills.

There will always be ethical decisions that children can be involved in, whether within the service, the child's home or the community, that children can become involved in. Some examples are described in the following table.

Concept	Ethical issues to consider
Squashing bugs	➤ Is this appropriate? ➤ Is it appropriate indoors but not outdoors where bugs live? ➤ Is it more appropriate to move them outdoors rather than squash them?
Sustainability	➤ Should a recycling project start at the service? ➤ Should money be saved up for a water tank or should it be spent on toys?
Renovations	➤ Should a tree be removed to enable a shade cloth to be constructed over the sandpit?
Materials and equipment	➤ Should the children use a paint that is non-toxic and environmentally friendly if it is less colourful than another that is bright but dangerous to the environment?
Food	➤ Should fees increase so children can be provided organic foods?
Smacking	➤ If educators are not allowed to smack children, should children be allowed to smack dolls while they are playing?

Children may not be able to take part in all decision-making, but they can be involved in the process of discussion of what they think is right. When this occurs, they will take a greater responsibility and interest in the outcome.

Practice Task 15

1. Which of the following statements about recognising emotions are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Children experience a range of emotions, which include both positive and negative feelings. All children will feel and express emotions in the same way. This is a process of maturation that all children go through. * Yes * No

   b. Quality play experiences can support children to express their emotions in a positive way. * Yes * No

   c. Discussion about the consequences of emotions would be inappropriate for young children. * Yes * No

   d. Children need to develop in all areas in order to learn to manage their feelings. When children's emotions are acknowledged, they recognise what they are feeling. This helps them to regulate their behaviours and understand the behaviours of others. * Yes * No

e. There are many ethical decisions that children can be involved in that are relevant to their lives and community. * Yes * No

f. Children will understand ethical issues better if they are taken to visit a police station or if a police officer attends the service to speak. * Yes * No

2. When a child is expressing anger, which of the following would be appropriate for an educator to say? Select all that apply.

- ☐ 'You seem angry. Can you tell me what has made you feel this way?'
- ☐ 'You need to go and sit on that chair until you have calmed down.'
- ☐ 'Would you like to pound on some dough to get rid of those angry feelings?'
- ☐ 'I know that you are feeling angry right now, but it is not alright to hit other people.'
- ☐ 'Would you like a cuddle to help you feel better?'
- ☐ 'You are obviously feeling angry. Go read a book and calm down.'

3. When a child is showing signs of fear, which of the following would be appropriate for an educator to say? Select all that apply.

- ☐ 'I can see that you are afraid. Let's move over to another area.'
- ☐ 'I can hear an ambulance coming past. I know that you don't like the loud noise. Would you like to go inside until it has passed?'
- ☐ 'Stay and look at the spider. That's how you will stop being frightened.'
- ☐ 'You're being silly. It's not going to hurt.'
- ☐ 'Would you like a cuddle?'
- ☐ 'I know that you're afraid. Would you like your teddy to cuddle for a while?'

3F Physical fitness, health and wellbeing

The success of your planned experiences relies heavily on how suitable the experiences are for the children you provide them for.

When choosing experiences for fine motor, gross motor and fundamental movement skills, reflect on what you notice about the child, and link experiences with the child's interests and level of development so activities are enticing and safe.

Provide for the following needs where possible:
➤ Infants need to explore objects with their mouths and need toys to swing, rattle and explore with their senses. They need to experience the outdoor environment to feel fresh air on their skin and to view different objects and activities.
➤ Toddlers need to use indoor and outdoor environments. They need time to practise their new skills of walking, climbing, balancing, pushing, pulling, dancing and using more challenging equipment.
➤ Preschoolers have a great need for outdoor play as they use their gross motor and fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, catching, dancing and cycling.

Promoting physical fitness

To promote physical fitness, start by providing active play that is suited to the children's needs.

You should then:

- encourage children by making positive comments about their efforts
- consider safety and risk
- include some organised activity each day; for example, a movement session or an obstacle course
- set a good example by being active yourself.

Hopscotch and other activities help to promote physical fitness.

Some ways to provide for physical fitness include:

- active games
- exercises
- asking children to help set up games
- using a range of environments and equipment
- incorporating sociodramatic play
- using construction materials.

Discussing physical activity

Children each have individual interests and strengths when it comes to physical activity.

Discussion with family members might include information about their child's:

- interests and strengths
- level of ability
- amount of physical activity at home or in out-of-service activities
- amount of screen time
- health and growth.

Some things that families might want to discuss include:

- if their child is developing appropriately
- if their child is participating in activities
- what their child enjoys doing during the day
- how they can reduce screen time at home
- what children need to be healthy.

How bodies work

When children understand how their bodies work, they are able to care for them and make better decisions.

To learn this information, children will watch educators and other people important to them. Educators can create ideas for discussions that link to how physical activity helps bodies to be strong and healthy.

Development stage	Discussion ideas	Examples
Infant	➤ Talk about activity and movement. ➤ Celebrate achievements such as learning to crawl, walk, etc. ➤ Incorporate song into movement.	➤ 'Look at your strong legs.' ➤ 'Yes! You are walking!' ➤ 'Row, row, row your boat.'
Toddler	➤ Talk about the activities they are completing. ➤ Describe their movements. ➤ Add words that describe the skills they are developing.	➤ 'Look at your strong arms sweeping the floor.' ➤ 'That is a huge jump!' ➤ 'Now your legs are running fast!'
Preschooler	➤ Involve the community through activities and visits. ➤ Talk about their body structures and how these work, such as muscles, bones and the brain. ➤ Discuss individual abilities and achievements.	➤ Invite a dietitian to talk about how food provides energy. ➤ 'Milk and cheese provide calcium to our bones to make them strong.' ➤ 'Hayley jumps very high and Stacey can run fast. They both have strong legs.'

Culture and physical health

The way you present and prioritise physical play opportunities may be affected by the specific cultural and lifestyle priorities of the community.

Take cultural considerations into account when determining how to approach health and physical fitness through exercise. For example, some communities place a high value on organic foods and active group experiences. Other communities have few opportunities to be involved in sports or active pursuits, and may include families who work long hours and have limited time.

In addition to these community factors, you may need to work with different family cultures. Families have different patterns of eating and exercise, and some families are:

- aware of dietary and activity needs, and encourage your service to promote healthy choices
- unaware of the potential dangers that unhealthy foods and lack of physical activity can have on health.

Families may or may not have appropriate resources to make informed choices about diet and physical fitness. Family culture may impact the choices you make in your menus and planned activities. Be responsive to family needs and expectations, and provide support when they request advice or direction.

Practice Task 16

1. Which of the following statements are correct about children and physical activity? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Children need to understand how their bodies work and how to care for them so that they can make better decisions relating to their health and wellbeing.
- [ ] The screen time recommendations relate to the early childhood curriculum and offering information about this to families may cause offence.
- [ ] Cultural considerations should be taken into account when planning and teaching about health and exercise. This relates both to physical activity and dietary requirements.
- [ ] Physical activity should be limited to organised activity sessions so educators can track the amount of activity each child gets.
- [ ] Educators should consider a child's interests, strengths and abilities when planning active play to ensure it is safe, positive and achievable.

2. The following are considerations and experiences that support children to understand how their bodies work. Draw a line to match each one to the correct age group.

* Providing outdoor play to use gross motor skills such as running, cycling and throwing.	* Infant
* Celebrating and discussing each physical achievement, including singing simple songs about movements such as 'Clap your hands'.	* Infant
* Providing experiences where children can explore through their senses, including toys they can mouth and toys that swing.	* Toddler
* Allowing time to practise walking, running, climbing, pushing and jumping both indoors and outdoors.	* Toddler
* Discussing how diet influences our bodies and talking about abilities and achievements, including asking others from the community to talk to children.	* Preschooler
* Discussing and describing movements and skills as they are completing them.	* Preschooler

3G Supporting agency

Communication is an important part of social interaction and includes verbal and non-verbal messages, cues and written skills.

Children with strong communication skills are likely to have strong social relationships as they are able to express their needs, identify others' needs and interact to achieve goals. Communication is required for successful cooperation, which relies on the child's ability to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

A child's ability in these areas can affect their success in a group or friendship, as other children appreciate those who are cooperative or able to resolve problems.

Children with well-developed social and communication skills will be able to cooperate.

In addition to having cooperation modelled, a child needs to be provided with the following to cooperate appropriately:

- have their point of view listened to and considered
- be involved in any solutions or problem-solving
- be provided with relevant information
- have the opportunity to consider another person's point of view (this may be difficult for young children)
- have some choices
- have successful cooperation acknowledged.

Children may be less likely to cooperate and more likely to engage in a power struggle if:

- they are interrupted without warning from an activity they are enjoying
- their routine is changed unexpectedly
- they hear 'no' often from adults
- they don't know how to do a task or what they are being asked to do.

Problem-solving and cognitive development

Cognitive development links very closely with all other areas of development.

Cognitive skills allow children to:

- think about what they are doing
- link what has occurred to a result or consequence
- communicate thoughts, feelings, attitudes and ideas.

There are two main cognitive areas that relate to experiencing the consequences of choices, actions and ideas during play:

- the manner in which choices, actions and ideas result in feelings
- consequences resulting from problem-solving and decision-making.

A child who has the opportunity to practise and explore aspects of cognitive development will be able to solve problems, develop agency and make sense of the world around them. Some cognitive processes children should have the opportunity to practise are outlined in the following table.

Logical thinking	Logical thinking is a learnt mental process where reasoning allows a conclusion to be reached. To think logically, the child must be able to collect ideas and facts, then consider possible consequences and solutions. They must then link these sequentially to enable problem-solving. Logical thinking skills allow children to see themselves as capable and competent.
Concentration	Concentration requires focus of attention. This focus consists of two parts – the will to focus and the skill to focus. Concentration allows the child to receive necessary information and is developed more effectively if the child has an interest in the topic being explored or experienced.
Perception	Perception is about using the senses and understanding what they are telling you. The more experience a child has of the world, the greater their ability to link what they see, hear, taste, smell and touch to things they know about.
Memory	Memory is broken into a number of areas: ➤ Receptive memory relates to the skill of recognising things later; for example, shapes, sounds, letters and faces. ➤ Sequential memory relates to the order of things. This assists in speaking, reading and mathematics, as sequences or patterns occur. ➤ Rote memory refers to the ability to learn from repetition rather than understanding. It also links to the ability to recall information. ➤ Short-term memory refers to remembering occurrences from a few seconds or minutes ago, such as a new person's name. ➤ Long-term memory refers to memory of things from the past.

Problem-solving attitudes

Your attitude towards children and how they learn has a strong influence on how successfully you plan and provide opportunities for exploring, understanding and solving problems in the environment.

When you do this effectively, children will learn to think and solve problems through hypothesis so they identify possible consequences. You will be developing their sense of agency by providing them with opportunities to contribute and participate in useful ways.

The following table illustrates the outcomes of some problem-solving strategies based on beliefs you may have.

Attitude	Educator strategies and/or beliefs	Consequences
Negative	➤ I solve the children's problems for them. ➤ I think that things should occur the way I want them to. ➤ I don't think the children are capable of solving their own problems.	➤ Children rely on you to solve problems. ➤ Children use inappropriate solutions when you are not present. ➤ Children have reduced social, emotional and cognitive development opportunities.
Positive	➤ I should support problem-solving and provide strategies when children need them. ➤ Children are capable of solving problems themselves. ➤ I think there are many ways events and issues can occur or be solved.	➤ Children attempt problem-solving themselves. ➤ Children use appropriate solutions when unsupervised. ➤ Children have increased social, emotional and cognitive development opportunities.

Cooperative processes

So that decision-making, problem-solving and conflict-resolution processes are cooperative, your interactions must be encouraging.

This means you should make suggestions, rather than provide directions or answers. To do this, you should take the following steps:

- Encourage children to interact with each other – introduce open-ended activities; this encourages children to feel important and to develop their own ideas.
- Help children to clarify or adapt their shared goals – to successfully make a decision, all participants need to have the same or a similar goal; you can help them talk about what they want to achieve.
- Involve children who are unlikely to initiate – quieter children are less likely to initiate and state their ideas, so support their involvement.
- Avoid demonstrating or solving problems for the children – allow the children to think about their options and consider all outcomes.

Children of different ages benefit from age-appropriate approaches to problem-solving:

- Infants need opportunities to explore cause and effect.
- Toddlers need equipment such as spades, spoons, buckets and baskets to explore the environment.
- Preschoolers need time to investigate a topic that interests them, such as how water taps work.

All children need the opportunity to practise trial and error.

You can support children to problem-solve by doing the following.

Encourage children to interact with each other	➤ Introduce activities in open-ended ways so children feel important and are encouraged to have their own ideas. ➤ Provide environments with lots of conversation and stimulation. ➤ Provide open-ended materials. ➤ Use everyday objects and events to explore the world.
Help children clarify or adapt their shared goals	➤ To successfully make a decision, all participants need to have the same or similar goal. ➤ Help children to apply their agency by: – talking about what they want to achieve – recognising problems – clarifying goals – planning strategies – asking open-ended questions – answering questions and finding solutions.
Involve children who are unlikely to participate	➤ Support everyone's involvement; quieter children are less likely to speak up and state their ideas. ➤ Scaffold emerging skills.

Example

Supporting cooperation

Two children are interested in sand play. Flick has strengths in castle-building and Pim has an interest in making roads.

The educator comments on Flick's castle and includes Pim by saying, 'Pim, look at how tall and strong Flick's castle is. Maybe you could make one of your roads go to the tower and Flick could make more castles along the road? Maybe Flick could show you how to make strong castles and you could show her how to make roads?'

These comments encourage the children to notice each other's strengths and consider how they can work together using their interests. They also give the children opportunities to learn from each other.

Decision-making strategy

To extend children's ability to make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflicts, you can implement a common decision-making strategy.

When implementing the steps of the strategy outlined below, encourage children to work with others to gain a broader view or support them to work through the steps themselves.

1. Define the situation	➤ Pick one point and work on that. Be specific: – What is the situation? – Why does it feel like a problem? – What is not working?
2. Brainstorm	➤ Search for solutions; any suggestion should be considered.
3. Select ideas	➤ Sometimes children select a solution as soon as it is identified rather than considering a range of ideas. When they need to choose, support them in thinking about the pros and cons for each option before they select one.
4. Put plans into action	➤ Encourage the children to implement their solution. You may need to help them do this, or just remind them of their decision. ➤ In some cases the solution may not work. This does not mean you should take over and decide for the children; it means that you need to help them identify a more suitable option.
5. Review what happened	➤ Notice how the problem was resolved and remember to give feedback.
6. Keep going	➤ The solution the children used may be useful in another situation. ➤ Encourage the children to reflect on the issue they resolved and use the information and skills to resolve other problem.

Environments and conflict

Conditions in the environment can lead to problems and conflicts between children.

Careful planning can help to control environments and assist in avoiding issues. The following table provides some ideas for this.

Condition	Description	Prevention strategies
Noise and overstimulation	An environment that is too noisy and overstimulating often encourages behaviour that leads to conflict.	➤ Adults should use quiet voices. Children will raise their voices to talk over loud adult voices and this can lead to a high noise level. ➤ Reduce background noise; for example, use music selectively. Children learn to tune out if there is constant background music. This can have a negative effect on their ability to listen carefully when required.
Crowded activities	Activities that are too crowded often encourage conflict.	➤ Set up activities so the number of children is automatically limited. For example, if you have enough play dough for two children to work at the table, include two lumps of dough and two chairs. If both chairs are occupied, other children can see that there is no space for them right now.

Condition	Description	Prevention strategies
Insufficient equipment	This shifts the child's focus from the activity itself to making sure equipment isn't taken by another child. The younger the child, the harder they find it to share or wait.	➤ Ensure that each child has their own individual equipment when possible. For example, six buckets and six spades can be provided in a sandpit that comfortably accommodates six children. ➤ Where it isn't practical to have enough equipment for each child, expect to help children to resolve conflicts. ➤ Remember that you can assist children under five years to share, but you can't expect them to share.
Overtired or overexcited children	Children who are overtired are less able to cope with other children and conflict may occur. Overexcited and boisterous behaviour is often an indication of tiredness.	➤ Provide rest periods in the routine to cater for these needs. The needs will fluctuate according to individual factors including age, weather and time of year. ➤ Rest might include sleep, lying quietly or playing quietly. ➤ Listening to music, a story tape or participating in gentle yoga can also provide rest time for children.
Activities that cause frustration	Experiences need to be appropriately challenging. If activities are too challenging, children may become frustrated. This can lead to conflict and aggression between children.	➤ Provide activities that are suited to the children's development levels. They will then be fully involved and conflict is less likely to occur. ➤ If an activity requires the adult to be doing or directing much of the time, it is probably not developmentally appropriate. ➤ As well as structured activities such as puzzles, provide plenty of open-ended experiences so children can work at their own pace and level. Open-ended experiences include play dough, water play, clay, painting, drawing, home corner and block corner.

Condition	Description	Prevention strategies
The need for time alone	It is valuable for children to enjoy their own company and to learn to work alone at times. Many children who are in long day care need extra time for working and playing uninterrupted by other children. Children who need time for solitary play may become involved in conflict more easily if this need is not met.	➤ Provide areas where one child can choose to work alone. ➤ Create quiet areas using cushions, mats, screens, tents, cubbies or furniture. ➤ Encourage children to ask first before joining someone who is working alone. This is part of learning to respect the rights of others. ➤ When planning experiences, make sure you offer a balance of solitary and group play.
Lack of agency	The greater the opportunity for children to be involved in decision making, the lower the chance that children will become frustrated. They may become disinterested or feel less of a sense of belonging.	➤ Involve children in decisions about all aspects of the day. ➤ Include decisions that are age and stage suited so that children feel success in their actions. ➤ Share choices so that you develop a respectful and cooperative relationship. ➤ If the day and the experiences require adults to direct and lead most of the time, children are not being provided opportunities to express their needs and ideas.

Supporting decision-making and problem-solving

When decisions need to be made, problems solved or conflicts defused, apply appropriate skills immediately.

There are times when you can use a group discussion to involve children in learning about limits, barriers, choices and relationships. When used regularly, these skills become part of your everyday thinking, which helps the child deal with other issues when they arise.

When children work together to make decisions and problem-solve they will be exposed to the different levels of agency of others. This can encourage each child to become more involved and to express their ideas.

To support decision-making, problem-solving and conflict resolution, take the following steps:

- Recognise when problems are developing and intervene with support before issues arise.
- Clarify goals by talking children through what they want to achieve.
- Plan strategies for supporting children to learn about and use decision-making, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills, and plan experiences that require these skills.
- Find solutions to issues that occur.
- Ask open-ended questions so children think about what is happening and what they can do themselves.
- Support children to share their ideas with others.
- Answer questions so children learn the information they need to make good choices.
- Provide open-ended materials so a range of options and ideas are available for the children to think about and experiment with.
- Provide new and stimulating materials so children remain busy and involved with their learning.
- Use everyday events as a basis for discussing how others may have made decisions, solved problems and dealt with conflict.
- Talk about routines and choices so children see options are available and that there are different ways to look at things.
- Encourage children to consult each other on decisions.
- Support parents to provide learning environments at home so children can transfer their skills to other environments.

When you assist children to develop their decision-making, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills, you can:

- give them a strategy to use when they are faced with decisions, problems and conflicts; for example, breaking the issue into manageable tasks
- help them identify what issues to tackle and in which order
- assist them to see other people's points of view.

Example

Problem-solving opportunities in play

Ashleigh, an educator, has observed Tim and Robbin playing for long periods in the block area, and considers block play to be an interest for these children.

To encourage a problem-solving approach and help the boys see that a consequence of working together would be creating a greater outcome, she sets up the block play and adds animals and tractors. She then places posters of farms on the wall in the block space.

To encourage problem-solving, she:

- is present in the block area when Tim and Robbin arrive, and discusses the area, assisting them to talk together and identify what they would like to achieve – together they set a goal
- observes Tim's and Robbin's reactions to the experience to ensure they are both interested in the activity and the goal
- checks that any additional materials or equipment are provided and assists Tim and Robbin to talk about new ideas and how to solve problems as the goal is being achieved
- discusses the children's progress, takes photos of their work and encourages others to have a look
- encourages Tim and Robbin to take a step back and look at their progress frequently.

Tim and Robbin set a goal to create a farm. During the time spent achieving this goal, they set other objectives that they work to achieve. Together, they:

- build a farmhouse
- make fences
- make a barn
- make a road to the farm
- clear areas for animals
- collect food for animals
- make a tractor and a four-wheel drive out of LEGO
- create a fishing pond.

Upon completion of their work, Ashleigh asks them how it feels to have worked together and how different the outcome is because of this collaboration.

Social interaction

When providing opportunities for social interaction, make them appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.

Infants are learning how interaction works – they imitate, take turns and copy the actions of others they interact with.

Toddlers have a greater ability to interact and start to choose their social activities based on shared interests. Children of this age group (one to three years) may benefit from the social interactions outlined in the following table.

Opportunities for small group play	➤ Provide: – home areas – simple games – open spaces to move.
Activities that encourage independence	➤ Allow toddlers: – help to set up simple tasks – opportunities to participate in self-help skills – dressing, washing hands, etc. – help with simple room responsibilities – setting the table, feeding the fish, etc. ➤ Provide all required materials and equipment that they need so they do not become frustrated or unable to complete the task.
Support when needed	➤ Provide the right degree of support depending on the child, their abilities and the task. ➤ Allow the child to complete tasks independently, but ensure you are available if needed. ➤ Encourage children by commenting positively as the task progresses. ➤ Provide direction by giving instructions. ➤ Assist by taking on a role in play.
Encourage sharing	➤ Ask children to share, but do not expect them to share. ➤ Supply common items, such as prams, dolls and bikes to allow for parallel play. ➤ Offer enough equipment for several children to play with similar toys at once.

Preschoolers are interested in relationships, exploring, investigating and being in control. Their imaginations allow them to play out a range of ideas and feelings based on social situations they have experienced or are interested in.

Preschoolers may benefit from the social interactions outlined in the following table.

Opportunities for small group activities	➤ Home area and other dramatic play ➤ Games ➤ Interest groups ➤ Planning groups ➤ Research groups ➤ Information-sharing and discussion groups
Opportunities for large group activities	➤ Music and movement ➤ Excursions ➤ Stories ➤ Sharing information ➤ Discussion groups
Provision of culturally appropriate materials and equipment for role-play	➤ A range of props ➤ A variety of resources that depict the home life of different children

All children need adequate time and spaces that provide them with privacy, solitude and quiet. You can provide for this by including areas that are secluded, apart from loud activity, set out with comfortable and cosy furniture, or accommodate just one child in an experience.

Group activities

Small or large groups of children can be involved in a variety of discussion activities.

These activities aim to enrich, extend and develop the children's areas of interest and development.

Small groups allow for the development of self-esteem and a more intimate interaction with educators and other children, whereas larger groups help to develop patience, turn-taking and cooperative skills.

Group activities can be either spontaneous informal sessions or formal planned sessions, and can focus on the children's interests, provide learning experiences and extend their development. They may also be regular parts of the day where children's agency is encouraged as they make decisions about what will happen next and how.

Spontaneous group experiences may include unplanned songs or stories, or the introduction of a puppet that contributes to an activity or helps to develop a new interest. They may also be used to regain control of an energy-charged room, calm a noisy period or extend on an interest of the group.

Discussion groups encourage active listening and social skills, and assist children to learn to listen to each other and value and respect each other's opinions. The length of any discussion group activity will vary depending on the age and developmental stage of the children involved. A discussion group consisting of two- to three-year-olds may last only two or three minutes, while a discussion group with four- to five-year-olds may last up to 15 minutes.

The success of this type of group relies on:

- how meaningful the topic is
- how well you prepare
- whether the discussion fits with the children's interests and developmental understanding
- whether you use open questions and other strategies for discussion
- how you influence the children to take an interest in the subject.

Example
Group time session plan

Child or group identification	**Age of child or group:**
Group 1 (10 children)	Five to six years old

Name and description of experience: Expressing emotions

Date: 17 January

Observation:

Two toddlers came into the room today and one of them was crying. Jeanette and Mischa came to the crying toddler and tried to pick him up, but he pushed them away with a scowl on his face. Jeanette and Mischa looked at each other and then they went to Adele, an educator, in the home corner. Mischa said, 'See that boy? I don't know why he looks at us with that face.'

Why this observation encouraged you to plan this experience:

Mischa and Jeanette appeared confused by the toddler's facial expressions. They didn't seem to know how to respond to the toddler's emotions or understand how he might feel. Other children in their group were not able to help them with information.

What is the value of this experience:

- Social and emotional: Understanding emotions of others and expressing their own emotions; recognising different facial messages and what they might mean.
- Language: Putting feelings into words and expressing how they might feel.
- Cognitive: Problem-solving using facial expressions.

Materials and equipment required:

- Posters of children with happy, sad, angry and surprised facial expressions
- Chair near the large wall mirror
- Felt board – happy face, sad face, angry face, surprised face
- Book: *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak

Strategies used to foster creativity and agency during the experience:

- Being prepared for children to express other emotions and linking them into the session
- Allowing children to share their own experiences and disagree if they have a different experience or emotion
- Being open to children sharing stories or scenarios

List your strategies for settling:

Sing 'Here are grandma's glasses'. Start the rhyme with a strong voice and finish with a whisper as I put my hands in my lap:

'Here are grandma's glasses; Here is grandma's hat

Here is the way she folds her hands and puts them in her lap'

(Actions with hands showing glasses and hat then folding hands in lap)

Explain the introduction:

Sing 'If you're happy and you know it'

Continue the song with 'If you're sad and you know it'

Explain the body of the experience:

- Use posters of children with expressions and have children identify what the child is expressing. Have the children express this emotion using their faces. Have them look at each other's faces and look at themselves in the mirror if they wish.
- Have different faces on a felt board and discuss with the children what each face means and what sorts of things can make them feel like this.
- Talk about what they might do if they feel happy, sad, angry or surprised, and what they would want other people to do.

Explain the conclusion:

- Read *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak.
- Point out the angry faces in the pictures.
- Think of some ways we might make Max and the animals in the story happy.

Explain your dispersal:

Ask individual children to make their choice of a happy, sad, angry or surprised face, and have other children guess what they are expressing. Then ask the child to go to the bathroom to wash their hands and sit for lunch.

Spontaneous interests catered for, extensions or changes to planned activity (complete after experience has been implemented):

- Elise added to our discussion by showing us her scared face, so we included this in our discussion and linked it with the story, including the fact that Max did not have a scared face.
- Joseph commented that Max had a scary face, not a scared face, so we talked about this and also pulled scary faces.

Listening

Listening is a critical communication skill – we listen both for enjoyment and to obtain information.

Listening requires skills to direct your attention to what is heard, gather meaning, interpret and decide on actions. If you encourage listening, children interpret and gain an understanding of the world around them

Educators need to be active listeners and role-model good listening skills. This includes responding to children's conversations and language, using correct pronunciation when speaking, and reflecting the child's conversations and words when responding to them. By modelling this behaviour, you will teach children to do the same.

Poor listening habits lead to misunderstood messages, language and relationships. Factors such as background noise, stress and time-pressed routines can affect children's ability to listen effectively.

Strong social listening skills involve a lifelong learning ability to:

- hear
- see
- engage with the speaker
- get pleasure from social interactions
- learn about taking turns
- follow directions and instructions.

Children have the opportunity to develop their listening and responding skills when you consult them and give them instructions. Children can listen to each other or be by themselves at a listening experience if you provide quiet spaces. Children find it easier to listen if the words are relevant to them, so choose age-appropriate language and topics they are interested in.

There are a number of specific games and activities you can provide that will assist the development of these listening skills, such as the following.

Stories, songs and poems	- Reading or telling stories - Rhymes - Poems - Learning words of songs

Drama/visual	- Videos and DVDs
	- Hand and finger puppets
	- Props
	- Felt boards
	- Imaginary and dramatic play relating to:
	  – cars
	  – people
	  – dolls
	  – animals
	  – home/community areas
	  – dress-ups

Personal interactions	- One-on-one interactions - Decision-making activities - Group discussions - Show and tell

Games	- Word games
	- Board games
	- Puzzles
	- Group activities and games:
	  – Who am I?
	  – Guessing games
	  – Fill-the-gaps games; leaving words out of rhymes, stories or sentences
	  – Matching games
	  – Finger play and poems (e.g. 'Where are your ...?')

Asking questions

Open-ended questions are a useful tool to incorporate into your everyday interactions.

Questions encourage children to listen and form a response, a skill that supports their use of communication as well as their confidence and self-esteem.

Think about how to word and present your questions so children are given an opportunity to explain and extend their answer beyond a simple yes or no.

Questions that involve a one-word answer such as yes or no are called closed questions. Some examples of closed questions are:

- Is it hot outside?
- Did that hurt?
- Do you like trains?
- Are you angry?

Some examples of open questions are:

- What is it like outside?
- What happened?
- What do you like to play with?
- How did you do that?

Following directions

Listening skills are required for a child to be able to follow directions.

The table below lists age-appropriate expectations for following directions.

Age	Expectations
Under two years	The child develops to be able to follow a simple instruction with one step; for example, 'Please bring the hat to me'.
By two years	The child can follow two-step instructions; for example, 'Please put your hat on, then go to the door', but may become distracted or only follow through part of the direction.
By three years	The child can follow three-step instructions; for example, 'Please get your hat, put it in your bag and then stand at the door', but may become distracted or only follow through part of the direction.
By five years	The child can follow more complex directions that require careful listening and remembering; these may include following demonstrations. They may attempt the instruction more than once to try to remember and complete it.

To give children the best possible opportunity to follow directions or instructions appropriately, take the following steps:

- Use positive directions to make sure the child understands what you want them to do, such as 'Put the paper on the table.' Avoid using negative directions such as, 'Don't put the paper in the bin.'
- Express directions clearly, and repeat the direction if needed.
- Model good listening skills.
- Try to make following directions fun.
- Provide age-appropriate directions and give children the opportunity to practice.
- Provide the direction in the order it is required (older children will be able to decipher order, younger children will need practice).
- Give directions in context; for example, if the child is painting, they may become confused or have difficulty remembering if you give a direction about sand play.
- Play non-competitive direction games to build skills.
- Have children practise following recipes (use illustrated recipes for young children).

Consultation

One of the most effective ways to encourage children to listen, respond and develop agency is to consult with them.

By consulting with them, you are supporting them to express their ideas and views. The level and method of consultation you have with children depends on their stage of development and their needs at the time.

Stage of development	Level and method of consultation
Infants and toddlers	Consulting infants and toddlers is simple and practical. Start by talking with infants and toddlers and showing them your interest by consulting them about the things that concern them. For example: - Tell infants what is going to happen to them: 'Let's change your nappy now'. - Give toddlers a warning about what is going to happen: 'We are going inside soon'. - Attend and respond to children's non-verbal communication: 'I can see you don't like that cold water'. - Be a positive model by verbally consulting with children and staff: 'Should we put the new mobile here?' While you cannot always expect an answer from an infant, by verbalising what you are doing, you are familiarising the child with this type of interaction and helping them think about their environment.

Preschoolers	Get to know the child's communication style and consult with them about simple matters that concern them, such as the activities and experiences that are interesting to them. Some preschoolers are skilled enough to help plan activities with you; others will need encouragement and support. Try the following suggestions: › Offer possible play choices and listen carefully to children's ideas. › Use open questions to encourage children to consider all options; for example, 'Do you think you can make something with those boxes?' › Only give a choice when it is appropriate; it is unfair to offer a choice you do not intend to provide. › Too many choices can confuse young children and make it hard for them to make a decision; give the number of choices suited to the child's ability to decide. › Help children understand the choices they have; never assume children know what you mean. › Use both verbal and non-verbal communication to help children understand; for example, pointing at or showing them something. › Encourage children to consult with each other.

Sustained shared conversations

A sustained shared conversation is a discussion – either spontaneous or planned.

Sustained shared conversations focus on a particular topic, but incorporate a range of ideas and thoughts, some initiated by the educator or family and some by the children. Children may participate in the conversation depending on their interests and needs.

A sustained shared conversation might become part of an inquiry process or a construction activity. Sustained shared conversations extend children's thinking and listening skills.

Difficulty participating

Some children have difficulty working with others or becoming involved in small or large groups.

These children may just need more experience, or they may have a communication challenge.

Some ways a child may misinterpret or react inappropriately in social situations include:

- laughing at inappropriate times
- ignoring others' attempts to interact with them
- becoming unexpectedly physically aggressive
- watching others play
- becoming withdrawn and finding hiding places while others play.

A child who has difficulty interacting with others needs time to familiarise or prepare themselves for the situation they plan to enter.

By supporting children to participate, they can learn skills such as how to:

- compromise
- share
- make decisions and solve problems
- understand how their emotions affect others
- win and lose gracefully
- use social and prosocial behaviours
- accept similarities and differences.

Practice Task 17

1. Draw a line to match the domain of development and the way this allows for successful cooperation to the example of practice.

* Social skills are needed to interact effectively with others.	* Educators should help children to clarify and adapt their goals, and allow them to solve problems themselves.
* Cognitive skills are needed to solve problems and understand consequences.	* Educators should allow for meaningful participation in shared decision making and discussions.
* Communication is needed so children can listen to the needs and ideas of others and respond.	* Educators should provide opportunities for listening and following directions.
* Emotionally, a child needs to feel comfortable, supported and encouraged.	* Educators should remain in close contact and offer a safe environment in which to explore.

2. Which of the following statements describe a curriculum that supports agency, including cooperation and conflict resolution? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Children who are provided with choices are involved and have their input considered and valued.
- ☐ Opportunities are provided in play that encourage children to think about and discuss consequences and support problem-solving.
- ☐ The environment is carefully planned to avoid issues that occur because of noise, equipment, activities, time and temperament of children.
- ☐ Activities, discussions, questions and consultation will aid problem-solving and support decision-making.
- ☐ Educators should use demonstration and solve problems for children so that they can directly learn how to solve difficulties.

Summary

- When children explore and experiment, they become engrossed in what they are doing and are led into an experience that may bring out new skills and knowledge.
- Most children find scientific, mathematic, engineering and technological learning experiences intriguing and enjoyable. Your outlook should reflect interest and confidence; a nervous or unsure approach can affect the child's curiosity and learning.
- In early childhood, activities such as experimenting with images and print are the beginning of a child's reading and writing skills. They support the child to start to read and write, and understand the many symbols used to communicate.
- Self-esteem is the feeling of confidence in one's own ability. Identity is about who you are and how you believe you fit into the world.
- A child with high self-esteem generally wants to attempt new play activities and will feel satisfaction through participating in play.
- Emotions can be expressed through verbal interaction and body language, including the use of body movements, gestures or facial expressions. Infants may communicate through different cries.
- Every child experiences emotions to different degrees and may even experience different emotions relating to the same event.
- When choosing experiences for fine motor, gross motor and fundamental movement skills, reflect on what you have noticed about the child, and link experiences with the child's interests and level of development so activities are enticing and safe.
- Language is an important part of social interaction and includes verbal and non-verbal messages, cues and written skills.
- Children with strong language skills may have strong social relationships as they are able to communicate their needs, identify others' needs and interact to achieve goals.
- Communication is required for successful cooperation, which relies on the child's ability to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Opportunities for development

1. Which of the following images show an educator actively helping to build children's sense of belonging? Select all that apply.

☐ 

☐ 

☐ 

☐ 

2. Look at the image below.

Which of the following might be appropriate to say to support the child in the image to understand the link between their physical fitness, health and wellbeing? Select all that apply.

- ☐ 'Wow, look how strong you are!'
- ☐ 'That is very clever. You have strong muscles to push that tyre.'
- ☐ 'You could help change the car tyre if your mum wasn't strong enough.'
- ☐ 'Aren't you a show off! Such a strong man!'
- ☐ 'You can do it. Use your healthy muscles to push hard.'

3. Describe one way you could provide opportunities for children to experience each of the following:

   a. Investigate ethical issues.

   b. Promote agency through cooperation and conflict resolution.

   c. Create a literacy-rich environment.

   d. Experience consequences of their choices, actions and ideas.

e. Investigate ideas, complex concepts, thinking, reasoning and hypothesising.

4. Draw a line to match each strategy taking place in the images to the learning opportunity it may provide.

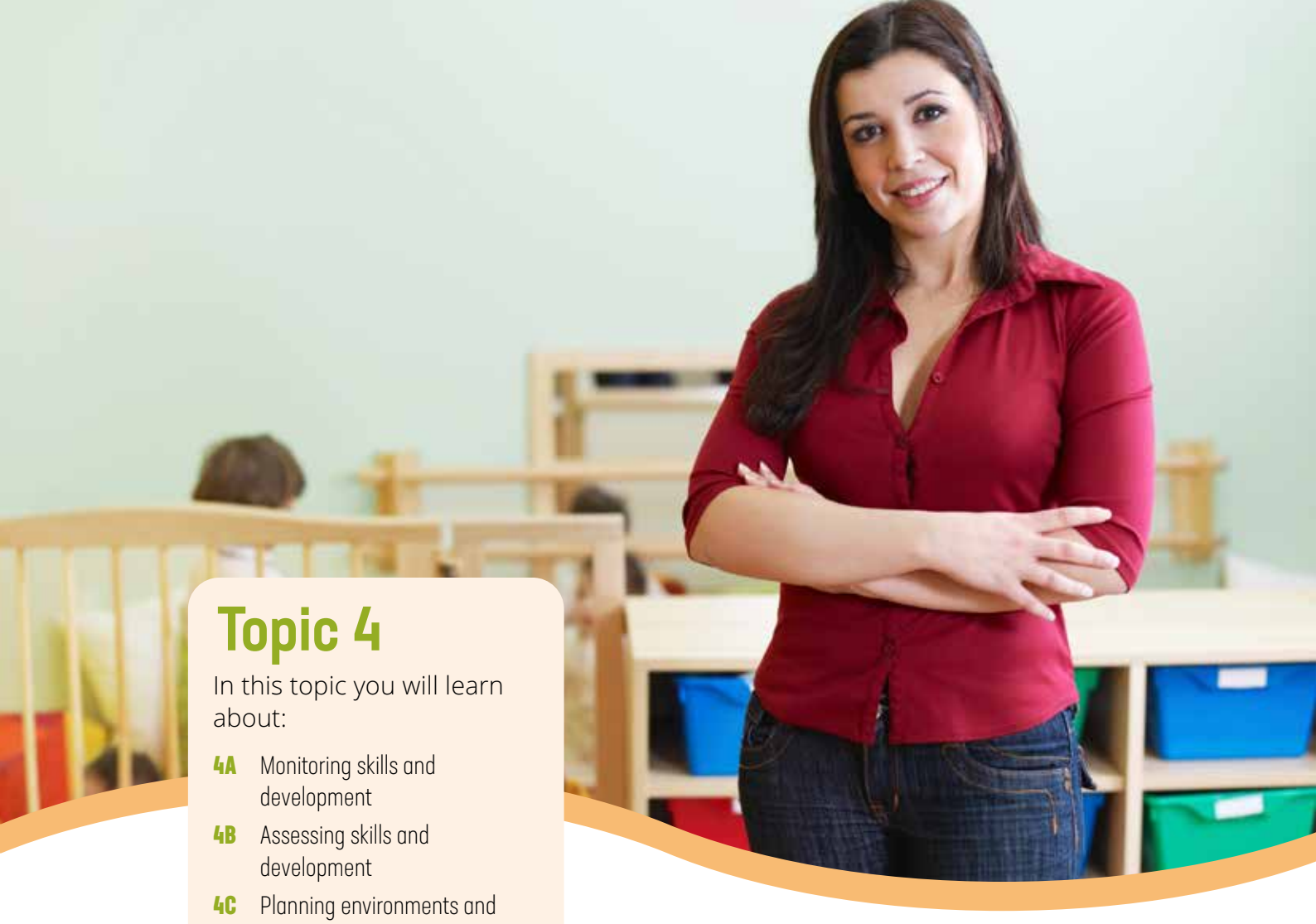
* Science
* Mathematics
* Engineering
* Technology

5. Draw a line to match each literacy opportunity on the left to the educator's strategies on the right.

* Gaining skills and knowledge from reading	* Child: 'My name is Milla Vanilla...that is Jack Mack and she is Ava Mava.' Educator: 'What great rhyming, maybe I can be Kate Gate.'
* Playing with words	* Child: 'Can you write the foods in the shop for my menu?' Educator: 'What a great idea. What would you like on the menu? I will make some labels for your food containers.
* Developing an awareness of print	* Child: 'Why does Milla use chopsticks to eat and not a knife? Educator: There is a great book on food around the world in the book area. Why don't we look at it and learn about different ways people eat?'
* Developing a positive attitude towards text	Educator: 'Let's read *Hairy Maclary* today. I love this book. I have two dogs at home that I love to read it to.'

6. Which of the following statements are correct about opportunities and strategies? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Children should only be provided strategies for promoting their own opportunities for learning.	* Yes	* No
b. To help children recognise their feelings, you can show them what their face looks like in a mirror.	* Yes	* No
c. One child might use a quiet area for times when they are sad, another might use the quiet area for releasing their anger away from others.	* Yes	* No
d. If newspapers using text from various cultures were placed in the home area, they might create opportunities for group discussion.	* Yes	* No
e. Shared decision-making might occur when small groups of children decide how they will build a structure.	* Yes	* No



Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

- **4A** Monitoring skills and development
- **4B** Assessing skills and development
- **4C** Planning environments and experiences
- **4D** Critical reflection

Planning effective learning environments

When you understand theory and convert it into practice, you will create environments that are meaningful and matched to children's needs.

You will also show your professional status as an educator who understands children's abilities and development.

From the information you gather, you will be able to plan for each child. You may need to collect information from children, families, other educators, other carers and specialists. The information you collect about children helps you to understand each child and to provide them with appropriate learning experiences. This changes a set of activities into a meaningful and purposeful environment rich with learning opportunities.

4A Monitoring skills and development

Observation provides information needed to monitor development and to assess the child's development before planning learning environments.

This information needs to be shared with other educators so they can collaborate on the assessment, and on creating consistent, engaging experiences.

When you monitor skills and development, you look at a child in different ways and gain different perspectives. These perspectives help you to identify their abilities, meaning what they can already do and understand. You will also note the skills they are developing. This information helps you to provide an ongoing and responsive curriculum.

Observe children during activities and routines to monitor their development.

When monitoring skills and development, you should look for:

- emerging skills, developmental milestones or stages (needs and abilities)
- how theories or approaches are reflected in development
- ways the child expresses themselves
- teachable moments, windows of opportunity or critical periods
- attachment and security
- interests and ideas
- environmental effects, such as the effects of time, space, materials and people
- autonomy and independence
- level of self-esteem and understanding of who they are.

Identifying individual differences

View the child in a range of ways and within different environments as children react and interact differently for a number of reasons.

This includes sharing assessment and evaluation with other educators, as they might notice different aspects of a child, have different interest or specialty areas, or the child may interact differently around them.

Development can be noticed during:

- formally organised activities
- unplanned or spontaneous interactions
- group discussions and meetings
- travelling times
- care routines
- excursions
- setting up
- sociodramatic play
- construction play
- art and craft activities.

Most of your monitoring will focus on identifying skills that have been mastered as well as emerging skills. By identifying emerging skills, you will be able to plan to scaffold learning.

Developmental needs are quite common, and sometimes mean a child requires additional support to develop a particular skill.

Event samples

For simple, measured assessment of children's developmental milestones, an event sample is an effective tool.

To create an effective developmental event sample, you must ensure the following:

- The contents of the event sample should include milestones appropriate for a child of their age and developmental stage.
- The event sample should help you to identify when a child shows emerging skills, requires support or needs to be more closely monitored.
- You must consider chronological age (the number of years the child has lived) and maturational age (the stage of development the child is demonstrating) so you are considering the child's individual needs, strengths and rate of development.

Each event sample should reflect the individual child rather than having one event sample for all children. Involve the child's family in decision-making. This helps you to consider cultural and family values and beliefs, and to identify the skills that each family feels are important for their child to develop. This is an excellent way to involve the family in the service. It is an opportunity to provide support and information to children and families while encouraging a collaborative relationship.

The following is an example of an event sample for an individual child with achievement dates and progress comments.

Physical development	Developmental comments	Date achieved
Walks independently		6th February
Walks up stairs using two feet on each step	6th March Crawls up stairs	24th March
Throws a large ball	24th February Pushes ball along ground	
Uses pincer grip to pick up small objects		20th March Picks up sultanas at snack time

Event samples can also be used to record the progress of a group of children, as in the following example.

Date: 12th June	Puts own jumper on (using buttons)	Puts own pants on (using zip)	Puts own shoes on (using velcro)	Puts own shoes on (tying laces)
Petra	✓	✓	✓	✓
Henry	✓			
Grace	✓		✓	
Nixon	✓	✓		
Steve	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gordon	✓			

Collecting and using information

By collecting and using information about children, you will be acknowledging and valuing the work of children and their families.

In addition, you will be:

- consulting others about activity choices
- encouraging children to choose activities that support aspects of their development
- encouraging children to participate
- adapting the environment to make it belong to the children and their families
- respecting different levels of participation – including the choice not to participate.

When your observations of children are guided by the children's views, cultural information, family knowledge and peers, you will be adhering to the processes outlined in the following table.

Process	Benefit for child development and wellbeing
Consultation	Use information from a range of related sources – each with their own perspectives and experiences. Children participate differently at home; they are influenced by their siblings and peers, they use different materials and their limitations are varied. Their cultural capital is untapped without consultation.
Valuing diversity	Stories, visual materials and activities based on information gathered supports learning about the similarities and differences between families (not just their religion or country of origin). Diversity is respected and becomes an influence that extends each child's experiences and initiates their ability to accept others. This type of opportunity enables each child to become excited and curious about the ways others participate in life.
Preparing contingencies and extensions	By involving others in your planning process, you are preparing for success. In particular, when children participate in planning, especially choosing, setting up and modifying activities, they are given the opportunity to participate more successfully and gain a sense of excitement at seeing their ideas evolve.
Encouraging full participation	By involving all stakeholders in every step, the activities and experiences you plan will be anticipated by others and increase their levels of interest. Parents may have materials or resources to offer, which may be required to implement the activity, complement the resources you already have or allow you to proceed in a direction you had not considered before. You will be stimulated to: ➤ explore new ideas ➤ develop deeper relationships ➤ listen and learn ➤ use your time differently and more effectively ➤ value children's contributions and abilities. You will see your role as the manager of communication, not only to ensure routines meet children's needs, but to work together with others on a daily basis to provide a lively environment valued by all.

Sharing information with children and peers

If you communicate with children frequently in meaningful and authentic discussions, you will gain a genuine understanding of them.

Children will feel that their contributions, ideas and interests are valued and appreciated, and they will feel a sense of belonging, enjoy being and extend themselves to become who they want to be. These concepts fit with the approved learning framework goals, as well as the Principle: Equity, inclusion and high expectations.

There are many ways to consult with children and gather their ideas. You might try:

- group or individual discussions or questioning
- spontaneous discussions or suggestions
- formal and informal requests
- anecdotal discussion (sharing experiences and stories)
- graffiti sheets and questionnaires.

Experiences might be evaluated and adapted due to children's feedback, whether before, during or after implementation.

The consultation you participate in with children provides you with records of communication and will link with the learning outcomes of the EYLF.

Consult children about their personal preferences.

Sharing information with families

When a family is involved and actively participates in discussion, you will know more about them and be able to focus on their child's individual interests and capabilities.

Information you might exchange in regard to children's development and wellbeing includes:

- their interests, strengths, abilities, skills and needs
- their level of participation
- how they interact with others
- equipment they use at home
- modifications to equipment to meet their abilities
- health-related information
- background information about the family or living arrangements
- their progress toward the EYLF outcomes.

Orientation information

Orientation is an ideal time to get to know a new child and family, and to collect information about them.

By the end of the orientation, you should have built a relationship with family members and the child, and gained enough information to understand the child's current stage of development.

A lot of information may be collected through informal methods, such as general conversations, but formal methods also require you to ensure you have all relevant details.

Formal methods of collecting information

- Enrolment form: A standard form that collects the same information for each family and is updated at least once a year.
- Enrolment interview: An orientation process where families are shown around the service and introduced to the environment while discussing the family's and child's experiences and preferences.
- Referral agent: Shared information from other services used by the family, with the family's consent; this may be ongoing or a one-off situation.
- Meetings: Uninterrupted time where information about children's needs, interests, routines and preferences can be exchanged, discussed and negotiated.
- Surveys: Written or verbal surveys are used to ask about particular information; this may be done regularly or just on certain occasions.
- Planning strategy: Involving parents at planning times and requesting their knowledge of certain areas and/or needs, goals and hopes for their child.

During a child's orientation period, the information you collect about them should include specific details of key words and phrases they use. This applies to all children, whether they speak English or another language at home. For example, a child may call their blanket a 'cuddly' or their mother 'mimi'. You may find it challenging to use these key words and phrases, but they are essential as you attempt to interpret and provide for the child.

Sharing information with educators

Sharing information with educators relies on the contribution of all parties involved providing feedback, comments and suggestions, or gaining knowledge and skills as needed.

Confidentiality must be respected, so educators you share most information with will be the ones responsible for the direct education and care of the child.

This open sharing enables educators to:

- create a holistic approach for the child to ensure successful outcomes occur
- become aware of other educators' needs and goals so they can be assessed and applied or adapted
- develop an ongoing, trusting relationship with each other, enabling a greater ability to work together
- openly share concerns and issues about children
- show respect for each person's contribution to the child and their family
- share the specific skills and views that each educator's personal expertise can provide
- contribute alternative attitudes and ideas about children's development and wellbeing
- be acknowledged for the individual role they play in the child's life, and be valued as a person rich in knowledge about individual children.

Share information you have gathered with other educators.

Recording observations in context

All records of observations need to be positively written and provided a context.

This will include information that allows those reading the record, including yourself, to understand who the record is about. Most records require the following details to develop a context:

- child's name (sometimes a code, changed name or initials are used for confidentiality)
- child's age or birth date
- date of observation
- time of observation
- setting
- who recorded the observation.

Recording methods and tools

While event samples and shared information are useful methods for monitoring skills and development, other tools and methods are also valuable.

The following summarises records that are useful for monitoring development.

Child records	The information you gather from others contains details about a child's learning, development, knowledge, ideas, strengths, interests, social interaction and reactions to the play environment that have been observed or written down by someone else. Some common child records that support developmental monitoring are: - enrolment forms - routine forms - play profiles - background profiles - incident reports - medical management plans - behaviour plans - specialist reports - communication apps - diaries, journals, logs and communication books.
Questioning children	Questioning can occur directly, or through developing a questioning method that allows children to consider and reply in their own time. Questioning can be useful for documenting information about a child's behaviour, learning, play preferences, strengths, interests and relationships. Some common ways to use questioning to monitor development are: - verbal questioning - brainstorming - surveys, feedback sheets and questionnaires - daily evaluation sheets.

Discussions with families	Discussions occur during each day, not only as a social activity to build trusting relationships, but also as a method of sharing information and developing knowledge. Discussion with parents, family members, guardians and carers will occur: › at orientation › at arrival and departure times › during phone conversations › during planned care review meetings › when parents participate in an activity.
Jottings	Many educators use simple reminder methods, such as jottings, during their day to gather details of observations that they can extend on later to produce a record of observation. Jottings are quick reminders, perhaps on a sticky note or in a pocket notebook. When you take quick notes for later extension, remember to add details such as names, dates and times. Jottings can be useful for documenting information about a child's behaviour, learning, play preferences, strengths, interests and relationships.
Anecdotal records	Anecdotal records are brief descriptions often written from memory. Anecdotal records do not record every detail of the environment or observed behaviour – the focus is just on the area of interest being observed. Anecdotal records are written in past tense as they are a reflection of what happened. Anecdotal records can be useful for documenting information about a child's: › learning › development › knowledge › ideas › strengths › interests › social interaction › reactions to the play environment.
Narratives	Narratives are stories that record what has happened over a period of time. This might be an account of an experience, a learning event, a project or a session. This makes it different to an anecdotal record, which records a single event or particular area of learning or development. A narrative is written in past tense as it is a reflection. It includes the details needed to show what happened and what learning or development occurred.
Learning stories	Evolving from New Zealand's Te Whariki curriculum, learning stories often use a narrative to describe learning, development, an incident or a project. A learning story may be added to by the child, family members and others who participate in the child's life. Each learning story should demonstrate that you are able to: › notice – observe children's learning › recognise – strive to understand what you notice › respond – put your understanding to use by acting to support and provide for the child.

Running records	A running record documents everything you see the child doing and saying during a specified amount of time, usually between one and 10 minutes. Decide the length of time you will observe the child for based on what you want to record. A running record is written in present tense as it is recording what you see at the time. It needs to contain information about the play spaces the child uses. It draws on your knowledge of child development because you need to understand every action of the child. It is also very demanding of your time because you need to continually observe and record.
Time samples	Time samples are observations taken at time intervals to record progressions or patterns of behaviour or interactions. The record may be taken every five minutes, every half an hour or at a set time each day.
Samples of work	Keeping samples of children's work helps you to build a clear record of progress or development of an interest. You can collect originals or create scanned copies. Always ask the child before you take their 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 families.
Sociograms	A sociogram is a simple and useful tool used to map interactions. It uses a web-like connection to show the interaction between children and/or adults. You may use a sociogram to record existing or emerging communication skills, social interaction, play preferences or changing dynamics in a group.
Webs and maps	Webs are an excellent tool for documenting a range of information about a particular child or group. The structure of a web allows you to identify links and clearly map out aspects you are focusing on. They are also useful for brainstorming activities. Webs might link to the whole child or may represent a specific area. This can be seen in cultural mapping where a child's background might be explored, including their: › religion › family beliefs › ethnic origin › knowledge › immediate and extended family › social demographics › food preferences › dress preferences.
Event samples	Event samples record your observations each time a particular event occurs. You need to specify which event is important to record and, each time this event occurs, add a record of what happened before, during and after the situation.

Digital images (using information and communication technology) can also be used to record observations as outlined in the following table.

Computers	Computers may be used to: ➤ record observations in a file for each child ➤ share information about children with parents via email or cloud sharing ➤ play a slideshow or video of a child's or group's learning journey to others; photographs, videos, sounds, commentary and text can be combined to tell the story ➤ help families access information through websites or social media.
Smartphones or tablets	Smartphones or tablets may be used to: ➤ record video: – encourage children to reflect on their activities – add videos to learning stories – demonstrate progression. ➤ make sound recordings: – record children's discussions – take verbal notes for you to write down in more detail later on – reflect on your own interactions as part of professional development. ➤ take photos: – allow children to take their own photos – add photos to learning stories – share with others.
Digital photo frames	A digital photo frame can be used to play slide shows of photos of activities, excursions or children's work. They are portable and relatively inexpensive.
Communication apps	There are a number of childcare apps that can be installed and used on smartphones, tablets, laptops or computers. These apps are designed for ease of use, to advance communication and simplify the recording process. Many apps link to families through programs, text message or email so information can be shared.

Practice Task 18

1. Which of the following are appropriate ways to gather feedback? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Asking a child to complete an enrolment form
- [ ] Asking a child's family to complete an anecdotal record
- [ ] Asking a specialist to send an email
- [ ] Involving an educator in a discussion
- [ ] Involving the child's family in a discussion via social media
- [ ] Asking the child questions

2. Draw a line to match each recording method or tool to its definition.

* Learning story	* Brief descriptions about an area of interest or learning that are often written from memory.
* Narrative	* Information gathered from children that may occur directly or through a questioning method, such as brainstorming, surveys, feedback, daily evaluation sheets or graffiti sheets.
* Jottings	* Information gathered from others to provide knowledge about a child.
* Time or event sample	* A story that is written in past tense to record what happened over a period of time and reflect on the learning event that took place.
* Questioning children	* Used to describe the learning that is taking place and may include the voices of others, such as the children, other educators and family members.
* Anecdotal record	* Simple reminders that can be added to or extended on at a later stage to develop a record of observation.
* Child record	* A recording made at particular time intervals or each time a specific event occurs.
* Cultural map	* A written and/or visual representation of a child's culture, such as their religion, ethnicity and beliefs.

3. Draw a line to match the developmental domain with the record showing the educator's monitoring and observation.

* Social development	* Ralph has sorted the pebbles, shells and bark. He is now separating the different types of shells.
* Cognitive development	* Ralph asked two children if they know how to make green from paint. They explained this while Ralph listened.
* Communication development	* Ralph talked about his nan and how she was sick. He cried and said he was scared that she won't be able to cuddle him when he visits.
* Physical development	* Ralph ran outside calling for Casey. Casey heard Ralph and ran to him. They embraced and ran to the sandpit together.
* Emotional development	* Ralph attempted to kick a soccer ball into the door of the cubby. Each time he was successful he stepped further away. He was successful eight times out of 10.

4B Assessing skills and development

Assessing a child's current skills and development helps you to plan future learning experiences.

It helps you to identify whether an experience, routine or transition was:

- of value to a child or group
- challenging
- above or below the child's or group's skill level
- linked to core principles
- linked to theories
- a good demonstration of learning
- suited to the child's or groups interests, strengths, skills and abilities.

Assess children's development to determine whether you have provided age-appropriate experiences.

Regulation 74 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations requires you to document child assessments or evaluations for delivery of the educational program.

This is supported by the EYLF Practice: Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing, which requires you to determine the extent to which children are progressing toward the learning outcomes.

This practice explains how you can use the developmental information you gather to make decisions about a child's progress, and identify any barriers to their progress and any areas that could benefit from additional support.

If you assess the progress of the child toward the EYLF outcomes, and consider their health and safety needs, you will have a complete picture of the child. Both the EYLF and NQS refer to the importance of monitoring children's development to assess their learning and development.

The EYLF is accessible in your service or online at: aspirelr.link/eylf.

The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* provides clear guidance relating to the NQS and regulation expectations. You can find the guide here: aspirelr.link/nqf-guide-pdf.

Developing a perspective

The aim of assessing observations is to analyse the information and develop a perspective that leads you to planning.

These perspectives will be linked to evidence. While many educators link their perspective to a learning outcome, you may analyse using developmental domains or theories.

While the actual domain is something that can be identified easily, milestones of development or stages of a theory will influence your planning and what you determine as meaningful.

Analysing what you notice means identifying what is important. When doing this, consider:

- the learning you noticed
- what was important when you noticed it
- what was important from the perspective of other people
- any development or developmental domains that were highlighted
- stages of theory that relate to your observation.

By doing this you are documenting your perspective. The perspective you identify may include a range of developmental, theoretical and learning aspects.

Example

Assessing and analysing an observation

Petra is an educator who observed Anton (five years) showing Shirley (four years), how to use the soap dispenser. When Shirley had washed her hands, she looked down and was unsure what to do next. Anton took her hand and told her they could be friends. Anton asked Shirley if she would like to play at the sand trough. The children built a sandcastle and engaged in dramatic play in which a prince was trapped in the castle by a dinosaur.

Petra assessed her observation to develop the following developmental perspectives:

- Anton and Shirley showed developmentally appropriate language skills.
- Anton demonstrated that he was able to communicate with Shirley to provide instructions and support. He was also able to order the steps and describe how to use the dispenser, which demonstrated his cognitive abilities.
- Shirley was able to listen and follow Anton's directions.
- Anton showed an understanding of friendship as expected in Selman's friendship theory.
- Both Anton and Shirley demonstrated a cooperative play stage (Parten's stages of play).
- Shirley would be expected to gain a sense of belonging, being invited to play as a friend.

Formative assessment

A formative assessment highlights the recognisable learning and development of the child, as shown in an observation record.

The record is evidence, while the formative assessment is the analysis. Your formative assessments should provide details of what you notice.

The following is an example of how different recording tools can be used to carry out a formative assessment.

Recording tool	Observation example	Formative assessment
Learning story	Delia, you worked at your sand picture for more than 15 minutes, using samples of the coloured sand available. You then came to me and said you wanted to add sand from the sandpit, so we collected sand and added this to your picture. Your work took some time to dry as you had used lots of tacky glue. When it was dry, I suggested you feel the sand texture. You were not sure what texture was, so I explained it was about how rough or smooth the sand was. You told me that the pink sand was your favourite and mentioned that you would like to do more activities with textures.	Delia used her creative ideas to add sandpit sand. She is learning about rough and smooth textures and commented on her interest in extending a knowledge of texture.
Jotting notes	During group time Delia explained to the group that she likes making healthy ice-cream.	Delia is showing an interest in healthy foods and cooking.
Anecdotal record	Delia was in the home corner. She used chopsticks competently to pick up the small plastic food samples. She looked in the home corner cupboards, asking me where the sushi kit was.	Delia shows interest in cooking and is very capable using chopsticks. She is aware of Japanese foods and cooking methods.

Practice Task 19

1. Draw a line to match each developmental domain with the educator's formative assessment of Ralph, aged five.

* Social development	* Ralph is able to sort using a range of individual aspects and then to break down these aspects.
* Cognitive development	* Ralph is able to ask questions and listen to instructions.
* Communication development	* Ralph shows an attachment to his nan. He demonstrated distress at her ill health and how this might change how his emotional needs are met.
* Physical development	* Ralph shows to have developed a relationship with Casey.
* Emotional development	* Ralph is competent at kicking a soccer ball and can kick into a small goal target from five metres.

4C Planning environments and experiences

After confirming your perspectives about aspects of the child's learning and development, you must create a holistic plan that designs your curriculum.

To prepare yourself and others for how the plans will play out, you must document and share the information so your expectations are followed through.

By using information, you can build on where the child is and develop them in a direction that is positive for them and which includes topics and experiences they enjoy.

This can be useful in many ways, as shown in the following table.

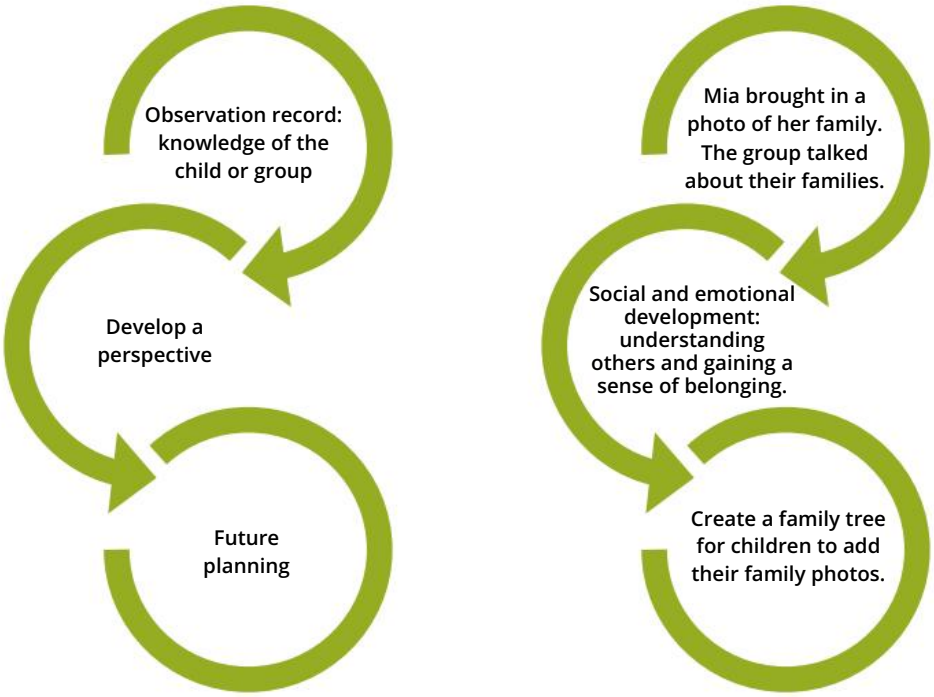
You may need to put thought into how you set up an environment or experience.

Aspect of the child	What this means	How you can implement this
Knowledge/ strengths/ interests	The child may want to share or develop in these areas.	➢ Extend the child. ➢ Support the child to use skills. ➢ Apply the topics to teach new or difficult skills.
Ideas	The child may want to see their ideas happen.	➢ Provide opportunities. ➢ Support discovery. ➢ Develop possibilities and show the child they are capable. ➢ Extend the child's skills, knowledge and relationships. ➢ Help the child learn to plan, negotiate, problem-solve and make decisions.
Social interactions	The child may want to develop a relationship, has demonstrated a relationship or is challenged by a relationship.	➢ Provide opportunities for social interaction and building relationships. ➢ Develop skills that are challenging – build on an area of knowledge, strength or interest. ➢ Extend the social experience.
Reactions to play environments	The child may feel comfortable or uncomfortable in a space, prefer one space over another or demonstrate different behaviours based on the environment provided.	➢ Listen to the message received and provide an environment that benefits the child. ➢ Provide choices in the environment.

Planning for developing skills

Once you have finished your analysis of the child, you need to plan future experiences for learning and development.

Below is a diagram showing the process of planning future experiences using your analysis. On the left is the process, on the right is an example of the process in practice.



When planning, consider individuals, groups, routines, experiences, inside and outside learning, and family needs and expectations. Plan to support children so they remain positive and encouraged, while you scaffold their learning and demonstrate respect.

Example

Planning for developing skills

Maria, an educator, observes Whitney (four years) using thick textas. Whitney writes numbers roughly but legibly on the paper. She then shows Maria the paper. She points to the number '4' and says it is how old she is.

Maria analyses this to gain a perspective that Whitney has:

- knowledge of numbers (cognitive development)
- strengths in writing numbers (physical development)
- strengths in recognising numbers (cognitive development)
- interest in writing (communication development)
- ability to talk about numbers (communication development).

Maria links this to emerging skills (Vygotsky's theory).

Maria also connects this observation to the EYLF Outcome Children are effective communicators.

Maria plans an experience that allows Whitney to extend her knowledge, strengths and interests while allowing for her open-ended use of materials. This in turn supports her cognitive, physical and communication development.

Planning for space

The success of your planned experiences relies heavily on how you set up the environment and ensure it meets children's needs.

Work with children to think about how space will be used. Children need safety and security; they need to feel safe without feeling overprotected. Finding a balance between safety and healthy risk-taking can be challenging.

When planning how to use space, remember the following:

- Children need hands-on experiences: They need to explore, touch, smell, move, create and build.
- Children need choices: Spaces must prompt children to choose an activity that interests them. There must be sufficient play spaces for children to have a choice of two or three experiences at any time.
- Children need challenges: The space you arrange needs to invite children to use their skills in a variety of ways. Offer a variety of possibilities and encourage children to collaborate, think creatively, solve problems and make decisions together.
- Children need flexibility: The space should be flexible to allow children to play in self-created play, or to combine two or more play experiences. For example, children may move the animals in the sand trough to the block area and extend their own play and interaction.
- Children need opportunities: Children need to be given opportunities to undertake the type of play appropriate for their age and stage of development. For older children, opportunities for each social play stage should be available.

Some theories you have studied can guide you in how to set up a well-prepared environment. These theories suggest that:

- materials match the child's developmental stage or milestones, interests, needs and abilities
- there are enough materials for the number of children in the group
- quality materials are provided
- materials reflect the cultures of those in the group
- materials introduce new concepts
- aesthetics have been considered.

In addition, there should be spaces where children can interact, and play in different activities and play stages. For example, there should be spaces for solitary play, cooperative play and games with rules.

Example

Developing social relationships

Hilda, an educator, notices that Ben, who usually spends the morning in solitary play, is involved in dramatic play with Gerard and Stacy. She decides to extend the play period for a little longer so Ben can continue to enjoy and develop social skills from this experience.

Providing sufficient time

When children are rushed through experiences, routines and transitions, they may become frustrated and the value of the activity may be lost.

Children need time to:

- make choices
- become involved
- change direction
- become involved again
- practise and master skills
- form relationships
- become independent.

Planning materials and resources

An aesthetically pleasing environment means an attractive environment, and refers to how the environment is set up, and how materials and experiences are offered.

If materials and resources are presented with care and look appealing, children will be inclined to care for them.

When you set up experiences for children, try to imagine how the child is going to see the experience and identify what messages your setup will send. An ideal setup says, 'Come and play!' You might find that the best way to achieve this is to involve the children in setting up experiences in their own way.

Other messages you should aim to send are:

- This space is cared for.
- Play is valued and respected.
- It is easy to play here.
- You can change this space and play out your own ideas.

The materials and equipment you choose has a huge impact on the quality and types of play children engage in. Choices should include active, passive, group and solitary physical activities, and should cater to each child's interests.

Materials and resources should:

- match the children's developmental stages and ages, interests, needs and abilities
- be sufficient for the number of children who wish to use them
- be of good quality
- promote independence where possible
- be set up safely without clutter
- be attractive and inviting.

Open-ended materials are useful for creating spontaneous challenges as they can be used in a variety of ways. Children and educators can increase challenges without interrupting play or needing to rely on other people or resources. For example, blocks facilitate open-ended experiences as they can be used in a variety of ways; a child who is constructing a long road using large blocks may see another child building a bridge and then try to make their own bridge.

When materials and resources are available to children, they are encouraged to be independent in their learning and choose activities and materials that interest them and are suited to their development.

Planning for safety

Children who are in a safe environment have more opportunities to explore, work together, develop and achieve goals, and feel secure in their play.

When children feel safe, they more readily explore the environment and engage in experiences. Your service has policies and procedures to ensure the building, materials and resources are safe. These are likely to include:

- a child-safe environment policy
- cleaning and safety checklists
- a risk assessment procedure
- a health and safety policy.

Your knowledge of child development and children's individual abilities allow you to identify how the environment needs to operate and be presented to ensure safety. Part of this involves considering specific abilities, such as a child's:

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

Other things that influence safety include:

- clothing choice
- weather conditions
- where equipment is placed
- flooring; for example, if it is slippery.

Expected behaviours

When communicating expected behaviours to children, use positive language that gives stage-appropriate details and instructions.

Describe acceptable behaviour rather than what is not accepted; it is much more effective to let a child know what you want them to do than what you don't want them to do.

Behaviour expectations let everyone know exactly what is expected of them. They should be clearly communicated to:

- children, especially those new to the service
- parents
- potential users of the service
- all staff, including relief staff.

The following are examples of common behaviour expectations written in a positive way:
Stay in the fenced area.
Sit at the table to eat and drink.
Be gentle with one another.
Walk inside.

Demonstrating enthusiasm

Your attitudes are extremely influential. Children watch what you say, think and do, and they learn from this, so always consider what you are modelling.

Your enthusiasm is demonstrated in how you prepare the environment, the experiences you select and how you implement routines and transitions. If you plan dull, repetitive exercises, children will choose other more enjoyable activities.

The following table contains examples of how you may model enthusiasm.

Situation	Modelling and interaction you may provide
Play dough with shape cutters and rolling pins	Discussing actions of others Rolling, pushing and pressing the dough Discussing how enjoyable it is to squeeze or manipulate the dough Filling a cake tin Rolling dough into a snake
Obstacle course	Allowing children to design the course Following the children around the course or participating yourself (consider safety and supervision) Using active body language when interacting; that is, if you say jump, jump up and down yourself Laughing and smiling Encouraging children through each stage of the course

Remember that the value of an experience relates to how you set it up and the materials you provide. For example, if you provide play dough on its own or with natural materials, its developmental value will be different to a setup that includes tools like scissors, rollers and cutters.

Engaging children

Children are more likely to be engaged in activities that are based on their interests and strengths, particularly if they have participated in choosing the activities.

Curiosity is about finding things out and experimenting; it is great for initiating a new activity or experience and encouraging participation.

To capture children's attention and stimulate a response, you could:

- ask open-ended questions
- be prepared for the children to adapt materials or change the experience or activity
- support experimentation
- be prepared to add more materials
- provide for all possible events, including having to clean up mess
- be curious and interested yourself, and reflect this in your comments.

There are a number of ways you can support children to learn through experiences, routines and transitions.

Encouraging learning and participation
➤ Support children to become involved in play – ask questions such as 'Do you need another person to play?' or 'Can Kristin join in?'; model how to enter play; or encourage the child by offering words to use or giving action ideas.
➤ Highlight differences in opinion, ideas and goals, and encourage children to explore these – discuss these things as they arise in conversation or play; for example, 'Isn't it interesting that you both have different ideas?'
➤ Support children to commence interactions and relationships with others and then offer ideas and assistance if difficulties arise.
➤ Support positive and effective interactions between children. Model, guide and set up situations that are challenging, but not frustrating.
➤ Scaffold learning and development by noticing emerging skills and providing support for these skills to develop.
➤ Recognise spontaneous teachable moments and provide learning that extends children's development through their interests, knowledge and skills.
➤ Balance child-initiated learning and intentional teaching by allowing children time to lead and participate in play of their choice, while including intentional teaching, spontaneous teaching and group activities.
➤ Facilitate diverse contributions from families by involving them in discussions and more planned interactions and information sharing.
➤ Promote a sense of belonging and connectedness by: – taking time to respond to individual children – helping children to develop an understanding of identity and how they fit in a group – supporting children to understand how they participate as a community member.

Spontaneous and planned activities

Many spontaneous and planned activities can be developed out of conversations you have with children and their responses to activities.

You can interact and communicate to:

- initiate play or an activity
- encourage a child
- help the child feel comfortable and safe
- introduce new words and/or language
- involve the child in setting up and modifying activities
- assist the child to participate.

When children are involved in open, stimulating activities, you may use their enjoyment to develop new skills and knowledge.

To achieve these goals:

- use open questions
- be prepared for the children to adapt materials or change the experience
- support experimentation
- be prepared to add more materials
- provide for all possible events; for example, cleaning up mess and slippery floors
- be curious and interested yourself and reflect this in your comments.

Extending experiences

Some of the most challenging, stimulating and educational activities and experiences come from simple ideas or discussions that occur spontaneously throughout the day.

A child may ask a question, notice something they have not seen or thought about before or become involved in new play themes. When this spontaneous event occurs, ensure the children continue to lead the activity that emerges from it.

Use verbal and non-verbal language to:

- allow children time to explore their ideas
- provide appropriate materials and resources
- enable children to continue their play
- encourage children to investigate
- see mistakes as learning opportunities.

As you watch children play and listen to their ideas, opportunities will arise for you to provide support and extend their play.

Extending play involves providing new ideas, objects or suggestions. When you provide extensions to play, children remain engaged for longer periods and can find a broader range of options for their play. This means that their sense of agency has been increased.

The extensions could take the form of:

- adding new props to a play space, such as dress-ups, toys or equipment
- suggesting a larger or smaller space for play
- adding a new idea relevant to the topic.

Example

Extending play

Crispin, an educator, notices that Abraham and Jeanette, both three years old, are working beside each other using the train set. The children have built a long, winding track. Crispin hears the children talking about who will drive the train and realises it only has one engine and three carriages. They are aware that the children will both want to drive and have their own train, so they collect more train parts and brings them out. 'Here, Abraham and Jeanette, there are many engines and carriages for you to choose from!'

Spontaneous teachable moments

Spontaneous teachable moments occur throughout the day.

A teachable moment is when you recognise a learning opportunity that you can provide guidance for. By reacting to these opportunities, you ensure children are gaining your positive feedback. As suggested in behaviourist theory, this is an excellent way to encourage children to continue to express themselves openly and develop greater language skills.

The following are some examples of spontaneous teachable moments:

- A child is watching a bird. You see this as a spontaneous teachable moment to support them with intentional teaching about what type of bird it is, where it lives and what it eats.
- A child is painting using different colours. You see this as a spontaneous teachable moment to provide intentional teaching about colour and experimenting with mixing colours.

The examples in the following table show how you might change experiences spontaneously.

Proposed experience	Monitoring	Spontaneous changes
Steve to put his shoes on and off using velcro.	Steve could open and close the velcro after demonstration and with initial support.	- Steve noticed that the educator's shoes had laces and was interested in undoing these. The educator allowed Steve to undo the laces. - The educator set up a lacing board as a spontaneous activity.

Proposed experience	Monitoring	Spontaneous changes
Jessie to climb the large A-frame as part of an obstacle course.	Jessie could: ➤ climb to the top of the A-frame ➤ climb down from the A-frame ➤ move over the top of the A-frame with an educator holding her hand. On the second day, Jessie could do the whole activity independently.	➤ Jessie liked to sit on the top of the A-frame before climbing down. She called to the other children, 'Look at me!' ➤ Jessie was wearing a dress on the second day. This presented a spontaneous challenge as it became caught in her feet. Jessie and the educator worked out how to make sure the dress was not in the way of her climbing.

There are times when it is important for you to become involved in experiences, routines and transitions so you can guide or model actions, such as showing a child how to use a particular piece of equipment or a tool. Here are some examples of intentional teaching.

Modelling and demonstrating	You may show a toddler how to hit pegs with a mallet by doing it yourself.
Asking open questions	You ask what the children might do to make the sand stick together to build a castle.
Speculating	You are helping a child to feed the fish. You comment that you are interested in how many goldfish there are.
Explaining	You are discussing insects and you explain that spiders have eight legs.
Problem-solving and shared thinking	You work with the children to create limits for a new experience.

Educator roles in play

The roles you take in children's play should extend its value and increase the child's agency.

If you think carefully about the play that is occurring and the messages or cues the children are sending you, you will be able to think about the roles you can take during play. This process will help you to identify when it is time for you to exit or change your type of participation. You might take on one or more of the following roles.

Observer	An observer watches, listens and tries to figure out what the play is about by understanding the children's perspectives and interests. An observer ensures the children are challenged yet not frustrated. Careful observation means you are less likely to say or do something that disrupts children's play, and you will have a better idea of what to say or do to extend children's play if the opportunity arises. You may be an observer initially and then move into one of the other play roles.

Provider	A provider notes what the children are trying to do and then thinks about what can be provided so that play can proceed smoothly. For example, a provider may arrange: › space for play › special materials for play › more time for play. Careful provision means you will support the play and allow it to continue. You can also extend the play by giving children more to think about and do in their play.
Mediator	A mediator helps children solve problems that occur in play when the children can't solve these problems themselves. This might involve supporting a child who is frustrated. Watch for times when children get stuck. For example, when an argument threatens to stop the play, this is a cue for you to step in as a mediator. You can then: › make a suggestion › offer an alternative › model a new way to act to solve the problem › support the children to work out a way to enable the play to continue. You extend children's skills in problem-solving when you intervene to mediate, as children will often copy your problem-solving solutions in future play.
Player	A player joins in with the play. This seems to be the easiest role, but careful thought is needed before joining in. Adults can be actively involved in play as long as they respect that the play belongs to the children. Being a player lets you: › extend play by modelling new ideas › assist new players to find a role › help children act out scenes or ideas that they don't know much about. A player also assists children to keep their play going for a longer period of time. It also strengthens the child–educator relationship, as the interaction allows both parties to learn more about each other.

Changing roles

Often when you take on a role in play, something will happen during the play that means you must change your role.

The table below gives some examples of how you might change your play role when you notice cues in the play.

Cues that tell you to change your involvement	What you should do	New role
Children are arguing, disagreeing, confused, tense or facing a problem.	Help children to solve the problem.	Mediator
Children are looking around or searching for things, or asking for materials or resources.	Provide resources.	Provider

Cues that tell you to change your involvement	What you should do	New role
Children ask you to play.	Join in playing.	Player
Play continues successfully.	Allow play to continue.	Player or observer
Items are not being cared for or are being used unsafely.	Remove items that are not required or suggest alternatives.	Provider or mediator
Play extends.	Provide additional resources.	Provider
Other children wish to join the group, but are not sure how.	Support the children to join in or provide additional resources.	Mediator or provider
You are playing with children, but your role reduces or changes and you are no longer needed.	Remove yourself from the play.	Observer

Practice Task 20

1. Draw a line to match each developmental domain with an example of a planned experience.

* Emotional development	* Provide a sorting game where two characteristics must be considered at once, such as shape and colour.
* Communication development	* Play 'Simon says' where the children listen to the instructions and copy the actions that include the words 'Simon says' and ignore those without the words.
* Physical development	* Discuss people that are important to us and how they make us feel.
* Social development	* Create teams of two and give responsibilities to each group, such as setting the table, feeding the rabbits or watering the plants.
* Cognitive development	* Provide a range of balls and associated equipment such as a tennis bat and ball, a cricket bat and ball, and a basketball and net.

2. Which of the following could you do to ensure a balance of child-initiated learning and intentional teaching? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Let children do what they want to sometimes and make the children participate in classroom-type activities at other times.
- [ ] Scaffold and provide intentional teaching during child-initiated learning experiences.
- [ ] When you notice a child's interest, add opportunities for the child to extend on this.
- [ ] Make sure the children are already in a group before you plan anything.
- [ ] Involve families in deciding what to plan.

3. When children are rushed through routines and transitions, they may become frustrated and the value of the activity may be lost.

* True * False

4D Critical reflection

Critical reflection occurs when you analyse and challenge the things you have done.

It allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to each experience and use this to inform your future actions and practices.

Critical reflection involves analysing your practices to determine how you can improve.

Critical reflection is an ongoing process that encourages change. Reflection feedback can come from colleagues, families, children and through self-analysis. Some questions you might ask include:

- What did/did not work?
- Who did/did not participate?
- Was the learning experience developmentally appropriate and age appropriate?
- How could I extend on this learning experience?
- Was the learning experience effective and enjoyable for the children?
- What feedback have I received from children, other educators, families or others?
- How does this information affect my pedagogy (teaching practices)?
- Did the strategies build children's sense of belonging?

As you watch children in experiences and listen to their ideas, opportunities may arise for you to extend their activity, or develop and change your pedagogy. When you adapt using critical reflection, your curriculum will change and support children to remain engaged for longer periods, to learn and develop, and help to create a greater sense of belonging.

Critical reflection involves first considering your attitudes and motivations. You should then identify your directions and how you plan to work towards a higher level of understanding or application of your skills and knowledge. While reflection is about checking on how you are going and asking yourself questions, critical reflection is a more in-depth process where you have improvement and development in mind.

The EYLF Principle: Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning supports you to plan to regularly think about how you are doing and what skills you could develop. As an educator, you are encouraged to make changes when needed and set goals for yourself to increase your knowledge and develop further understanding of each child and their family.

Methods of reflection

There are various methods of reflection. You may decide to use one or more of these methods to reflect on your practice.

The following outlines how different methods of reflection can be documented.

Questioning

Before and after questions are useful.

Consider what you feel and think before, during and after an experience, routine or transition. Ask some or all of the following questions of yourself and others, including children and families:

- What do you feel and think now?
- What do you understand now that you didn't before?
- How will this affect what you do next?
- What do you need to know or do next, e.g. research, skills, support or cooperation?
- What do you want to achieve next?
- How could we do this better?
- Should we do this again?
- Did the child gain a sense of belonging?

Journals, diaries or reflection logs

Journals, diaries and logs record thoughts and feelings, allowing you to look back later to evaluate. They also demonstrate progress. You can use critical reflection questions or record your thoughts on the techniques you use, materials you need, the context of your work and the ideas you have.

A journal could include research, personal comments, feedback from others, notes from professional development activities, quotes, photos and sketches. It should be meaningful to you and should record what you want to do next.

Discussion

Discussions occur every day at work when you are talking to other educators, children, families and community members. Each discussion provides the opportunity to critically reflect.

Supervision

Your supervisor should encourage you to self-reflect. Strategies might include:

- educational supervision; for example, stretching your skills so you attempt greater challenges
- administrative supervision; for example, promoting best practice and quality work
- supportive supervision; for example, encouraging you to implement a new philosophy or strategy.

Example

Using critical reflection

After rest time, Jack woke and started to dress. Michelle noticed that he was struggling with his socks and that his little toe was caught. Jack seemed frustrated and continued to pull at the sock. Michelle approached and told Jack she could help. She unhooked his little toe and pulled the sock onto Jack's foot. Jack cried out, 'No! I want to do it!' He dropped to his mattress and wailed.

Michelle felt annoyed with herself – she knows that Jack is learning to dress himself and that he needs time to do this. Michelle also felt disappointed as she had an opportunity to have one-on-one time with Jack. Now Jack is upset and Michelle feels responsible for creating his emotional state and missing out on a learning opportunity.

Later, Michelle critically reflects with her supervisor using the following questions:

- **How and why did this happen?**

Michelle did not think about Jack's developing autonomy. She wanted to help him get dressed so he could start playing as soon as possible. She viewed his priorities through her eyes instead of from Jack's perspective.

- **What should Michelle have done to rectify the situation?**

If this were to happen again, Michelle could settle Jack and apologise. She could offer to help him take his socks off again so he can show her how he puts them on himself. She could initiate a game of 'This little piggy' to restore a happy atmosphere and encourage Jack to respond to her revised approach.

- **How will this alter Michelle's future actions and values (pedagogy)?**

Michelle must be more aware of what the children are attempting at routine times. She must build up a knowledge of children's emerging skills and talk to the other educators about this. She must approach every routine with the intention of finding out what skills children are demonstrating and how they are managing their learning.

- **What did Michelle learn and why is it significant?**

Michelle learnt to think about how she interacts with the children and what opportunities she can provide in the environment for children to achieve their personal goals. She also realised that children learn many skills during routine times and that routines sometimes offer richer learning opportunities than planned learning times.

Feedback from others

Other people can provide useful feedback about your skills and knowledge, and on how you influence them.

By giving others opportunities to express their ideas, opinions, requests or thoughts, you are meeting both their needs and your own.

You might gather reflective feedback through general conversations and discussions, or through surveys, meetings, questionnaires or forms. Service guidelines may determine which reflection strategies should be used.

Ways to gain reflections from others include:

- talking to people – during visits, interviews, spontaneous discussion and meetings
- gathering feedback – through suggestions requests, communication books and apps
- holding meetings – uninterrupted time when information can be exchanged and discussed
- observing and listening
- contacting by phone
- emailing
- using social media such as Facebook or in-house programs or apps
- conducting verbal surveys
- asking people to complete templates or forms.

Children are central to your planning and reflection. Children can talk about what they are learning, identify what they would like to do differently, and talk about their interests and abilities. By letting children be part of the planning process, they begin to have a vision for themselves and develop greater confidence. They become active participants in their own learning and are able to take pride in their accomplishments. Their sense of belonging is increased through this participation. Families might provide feedback confirming their child's feelings about the service, the educators, and if they feel that they belong.

Example

Reflecting with children and colleagues

Isabelle planned the following experience to encourage children to explore texture and colour. She placed yellow, blue and red blobs of paint on a table. She added a thick paint brush, a small jug of water and a cup of sand. She encouraged the children to use the materials as they chose.

Isabelle supported children who were unsure by asking questions such as:

- What colour is the paint?
- Will you use the brush or your hand?
- How does it feel?
- How might you use the sand?
- How do you think it would feel if you add the sand?

Following the experience, she asked children and other educators for feedback.

The children said they would like to do it again. They said they would like to use foam rollers so they could roll paint onto their hands. One child said he didn't like having paint on his hands.

Other educators mentioned that there was too much water. This caused the paint to become thin and spilt from the table, making the floor slippery. It was suggested that Isabelle use less water in the jug. There were some suggestions that Isabelle might add some pebbles or play dough to add some contrasting texture.

Isabelle used the feedback to critically reflect on her practice. She realised she didn't consider safety enough and could have altered the amount of water during the experience to cater for this. She decided that she needed to consider all children's needs to explore texture, so should provide a feely game in a quiet space.

Practice Task 21

1. Draw a line to match each critical reflection method to its example.

* Journals, diaries or reflection logs	* Consider what you feel and think before, during and after an experience, routine or transition.
* Supervision	* Use critical reflection questions or write about thoughts on the techniques you use, materials you need, the context of your work and the ideas you have.
* Questioning	* This involves talking to other educators, children, families and community members.
* Discussion	* Strategies for self-reflection include stretching your skills so you attempt greater challenges; promoting best practice and quality work; and implementing a new philosophy or strategy.

2. Which of the following are reasons for evaluating your work practices through critical reflection? Select all that apply.

- [ ] To help you to monitor and evaluate your strategies for building children's sense of belonging.
- [ ] To ensure plans remain purposeful.
- [ ] To further inform planning.
- [ ] To show other educators you are good at your job.
- [ ] So that families don't complain.
- [ ] To gather more information and provide direction.

Summary

- When you monitor skills and development, you consider a child in different ways and gain different perspectives, which help you to identify the child's abilities, and what they can already do and understand.
- The aim of assessing observations is to analyse the information and develop a perspective that leads you to planning. These perspectives will be linked to evidence.
- By using information, you can build on where the child is and develop them in a direction that is positive for them and which includes topics and experiences they enjoy.
- Reflection occurs when you analyse and challenge the things you have done. It allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to each experience and use this to inform your future actions and practices.

Learning Checkpoint 4
Planning effective learning environments

Look at the images below and answer the questions that follow.

Lynley provided the following experiences for three children.

Experience 1

Experience 2

Experience 3

Experience 4

1. Which of the following might Lynley expect to monitor during her observation of each of these experiences? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Fine motor skills
- ☐ Cognitive understanding of symbols
- ☐ Social play stages
- ☐ How many languages are used by children
- ☐ Gross motor skills
- ☐ If the children show negative emotions during play

2. Which of the experiences would provide opportunities for child-initiated play and learning? Select the correct answer.

- [ ] Experience 1
- [ ] Experience 2
- [ ] Experience 3
- [ ] Experience 4

3. Which of the experiences would be best suited to provide to an individual child? Select the correct answer.

- [ ] Experience 1
- [ ] Experience 2
- [ ] Experience 3
- [ ] Experience 4

4. Which of the experiences would be best suited to provide to a group of children? Select the correct answer.

- [ ] Experience 1
- [ ] Experience 2
- [ ] Experience 3
- [ ] Experience 4

5. Which of the following statements about evaluation are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a.	Lynley could ask the children about Experience 3 and how it might be like their own homes. This would help evaluate the children's sense of belonging.	* Yes	* No
b.	Two experiences provide for child-initiated learning and two experiences might be intentional teaching. This creates a balance of experiences.	* Yes	* No
c.	If Lynley received feedback from families and children, she must record this in a diary or log. She must also change her pedagogy.	* Yes	* No
d.	Lynley begin a process of critical reflection by gaining feedback from families and other educators. She might ask if she should add to or change the experiences she has provided or adjust her pedagogy to better provide for children's learning.	* Yes	* No
e.	Lynley could join the children in the home area and discuss what happens in their home. She could critically reflect on this information to smooth the transition between home and service.	* Yes	* No