

Approaches to Assessment for Learning

Educators use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's learning. They search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depict children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings.



More recent approaches to assessment also examines the learning strategies that children use and reflect ways in which learning is co-constructed through interactions between the educator and each child. Used effectively, these approaches to assessment become powerful ways to make the process of learning visible to children and their families, educators and other professionals.

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

participated in increasingly sophisticated learning experiences.

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

All children demonstrate their learning in different ways. Approaches to assessment that are culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive to the physical and intellectual capabilities of each child will acknowledge each child's abilities and strengths, and allow them to demonstrate competence.

Including children, families and other professionals in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate assessment processes allows for new understandings to emerge that are not possible if educators rely solely on their own strategies and perspectives.



Developing inclusive assessment practices with children and their families demonstrates respect for diversity, helps educators make better sense of what they have observed and supports learning for both children and adults. Assessment, when undertaken in collaboration with

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



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

- the experiences and environments they provide and how that links to the intended learning outcomes the extent to which they know and value the culturally specific knowledge about children and learning that is embedded within the community in which they are working
- each child's learning in the context of their families, drawing family perspectives, understandings, experiences and expectations
- the learning opportunities which build on what children already know and what they bring to the early childhood setting
- evidence that the learning experiences offered are inclusive of all children and culturally appropriate not making assumptions about children's learning or setting lower expectations for some children because of unacknowledged biases

- incorporating pedagogical practices that reflect knowledge of diverse perspectives and contribute to children's wellbeing and successful learning
- whether there are sufficiently challenging experiences for all children
- the evidence that demonstrates children are learning
- how they can expand the range of ways they assess to make assessment richer and more useful.

Quality versus Quantity

It is not about the quantity of documentation that educators produce but it is DEFINITELY about the quality of the documentation. It is about how you can best capture rich, meaningful learning that is significant to the child or children and which you can use to assess what the child knows, can do or understands as well as how they are progressing toward the outcomes.



Note there is no specified number of assessments for each child. It is not monthly, weekly or daily but will be related to the "period of time that the child is being educated and cared for by the service".

Children who spend more time at a service will have more assessments or evaluations. Use your professional judgement, document what is significant (eg learning you haven't seen before) and remember it's about quality not quantity.

Principles, Practices and Philosophy

It is not compulsory to add theories that inform our practice, philosophy extracts, NQS, EYLF or MTOP principles and practices to the families' documentation. These beliefs and pedagogical practices should be evident to the reader from the description of the learning and the educator's actions in say a learning story or a reflection of the child's learning. These can be used however, in team and professional educator reflections to improve how you teach and your children learn.

Learning documentation is available to families

Regulation 74 Child assessments or evaluations are documented.

Written plans and records of child assessment and evaluations underpin practice with children and families and enhance the accountability and professionalism of the service.

Documenting children's experiences and their responses to the environment makes children's learning visible to children, educators and families and promotes shared learning and collaboration.



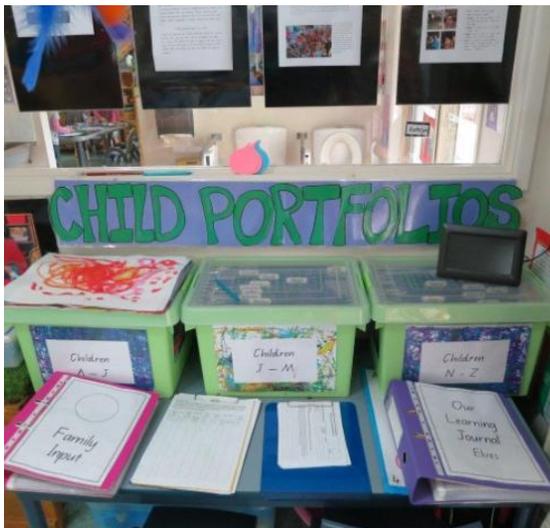
Working in partnership with families, educators use the learning outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning. To engage children actively in learning, educators identify children's strengths and interests, choose appropriate teaching strategies and design the learning environment. Educators carefully assess learning to inform further planning.

Learning documentation can provide an assessment of what the child knows, can do and understands by evaluating against the learning outcomes. The documentation can take many forms including:

1. Centre Support's daily **Curriculum Planning Sheet** with the symbols showing how the learning was initiated, the co-construction with the child and family, the extension of learning that took place in the 'here and now' (EYLF). Some services may use alternative methods including day books, internet and computer programs.
2. Centre Support's **Child Reflection Planning Sheets, Celebration of Achievement Charts., Family Input Sheets, Strength Trees** and **Learning Stories**



3. **Work samples** such as art work, creative craft/construction, video/audio and photos evaluated against learning outcomes with an educator reflection as to how the child met the outcomes.
4. **Portfolios:** although not compulsory many services choose to provide families with an individual file/book containing assessment samples in the form of reflections, learning stories, work samples etc.



In all of your documentation about children you will assess them by using the learning outcomes. Often educators are confused about the term ‘development’ and believe this refers to the old ages and stages approach however development is not just physical/biological.

The EYLF considers ‘development’ from a socio-cultural perspective which results from social interactions and relationships with our families and community.

Development is embedded in the learning outcomes.

Remember – Planning, documenting and evaluating children’s learning is an ongoing cycle that underpins the educational

program and involves educators in critically thinking about what is offered any why.

Planning involves observing, gathering and interpreting information about children to inform the preparation of environments and experiences that engage them and are meaningful for them. It involves reflecting on and documenting children’s experiences and learning.

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Documentation Checklist

Use the following to check your learning stories

- Are the children's names in the learning documentation?
- Where did the experience come from? (Family, child or educator)
- How did we follow the children's direction with the experience? (Co-construct, i.e. what educators do with the children to continue with the experience)
- What quotes from children need documenting to capture the learning? (The children's quote shows their thinking, thoughts and how they make sense of their world)
- What children's actions need documenting to capture the learning? (Was it a skill, concept, disposition or all of these? Perhaps it was learning to persevere, problem solve, understand where milk comes from or what author's role is a book is, mathematical concepts such as measurements when constructing a cardboard house or connecting the letter with its sound)
- How did we continue the learning NOW rather than planning to do it later? (This can be as simple as furthering a conversation with questions providing a whole range of experiences)
- What were your thoughts as an educator? (Reflection – explain why or how the child demonstrated this. What did the child learn or demonstrate for you to assess him/her as meeting the outcome)
- Is your name on it (not 'educator') and what you did as the intentional teacher? (Be proud of how your input into the experience furthers the child's learning. Documenting what you do shows the principles and practices)
- Can you add an EYLF practice or principle or is this integrated throughout the story? (Can the reader see what you did as an educator?)
- How can this learning be extended? (What is next?) If the learning can be continued as say a project, excursion or something specifically planned with the children, describe it here. Maybe you might mention how you will incorporate further learning into the curriculum by a specific routine. Please be careful not to just put a resource here just because we did this in old DAP learning. We are planning for learning. Learning is not always linear or predictable therefore you may wish to look at future learning possibilities for the child such as "continue to promote the child's interest in numbers through routines and transitions" or "encourage the child's curiosity in science, nature and cooking as examples."

