

Educators

The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

Looking at the element in detail - A service reviewed what the NQF Guide said about element 3.2.3 and understood it includes:

- teaching children about their responsibility to respect and care for the natural environment in a sustainable way and
- implementing sustainable practices at the Service.

This week we're starting off in a different way by looking at a theory first that links to the Element in a way you may not have thought about. Then we'll apply it to practice.

Biophilia

Edward Wilson in his 1984 book *Biophilia* defined Biophilia as humans having an innate connection with nature, and that exposure to the natural world is important for human wellbeing.

There is a growing concern that humans have become alienated from nature due to the ever-increasing urbanisations and high-density buildings and apartments people live in. Nature has been replaced with roads and pavements, while parks are removing perceived unsafe natural play spaces for safer plastic play equipment.

The practices of biophilic design can be applied to the design of human built environments. This type of design comes in two broad forms. The first is direct contact with nature.



The second form relies on images and representation of nature like that below.



There's a growing body of evidence that shows biophilic design supports physical health, cognitive function and psychological well-being, and promotes productivity. Some environments, known as restorative environments, can help people recover from fatigue and stress.

We can use biophilic design principles to promote learning about the environment and sustainability.

Examples

Having plants is not enough. Educators and children must interact, smell, feel, care for and water the plants.

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How could you set up a propagation table where educators and children can strike and grow their own plants for their room and play spaces to experience and learn about nature?

Where are you at compared to the practices of biophilic design in your room and service? How could you improve?

Biomimicry theory

Using nature to inspire you could, for example, project onto a screen large, digital, inspirational images from nature that have solved a problem. For example, a cyber security project may display ways plants protect themselves. Again this links to environmental awareness.



Native Australian beehives could be installed outside where the educators and children can take a break and watch a hive work. The beehive may prompt the expression of feelings and self-reflection which is the theory of cognitive biophilia ie thoughts which occur as a result of the natural environment. These in turn can be used to promote environmental responsibility. What living things could you obtain for your spaces to allow for cognitive biophilia?



How could you develop creative solutions with biomimicry theory?

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The EYLF and MTOP says “Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives.” Pick one of the following reflection points to complete the table below:

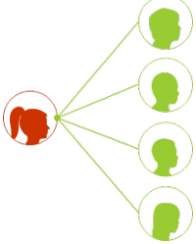
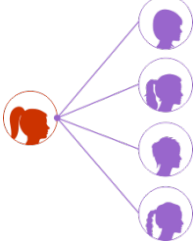
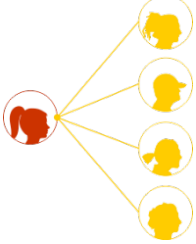
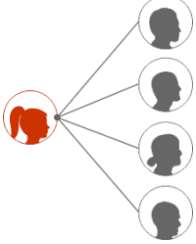
- How could you teach children about sustainability by exploring local environmental or community practices - those that respect the environment or could be improved?
- Do you make the most of opportunities to promote learning about caring for the environment? (included in QIP improvement plan)
- Are there service practices that could be made more environmentally friendly?

Critically reflect through the eyes of:	Write your critical reflection below	What changes did you or will you make because of the reflection?
<p>a child</p>	There’s heaps of garbage here in the creek. (Ryan)	<p>Miss Kayla mentioned to the EL the outing venue was disappointing because of the amount of rubbish.</p> <p>The EL asked if she’d used the opportunity to teach children how to care for the environment eg ‘Where does the rubbish come from.’ ‘How might we stop it getting in the creek?’ What might be happening to the fish etc.’’</p>
<p>an educator</p>	I thought it’d be a nice outing to walk down to the creek but it’s not very attractive with all the rubbish around. We should find a different spot next time which maybe has some fish. (Miss Kayla)	<p>Miss Kayla realised this could be a valuable learning experience for the children. After further reflection she decided to speak with the local council to find out if they were doing anything to improve or restore the area. Yes – they were, for example, installing bins near the creek and barriers in the creek where most of the rubbish collected to stop it spreading further. She and the children began monitoring rubbish levels to see if these measures were helping.</p>
<p>your families</p>	Ryan said they walked to the creek today. He said it was yucky and smelly. Not surprising – I’ve seen the rubbish in parts of it. I asked Ryan if Miss Kayla mentioned the rubbish and Ryan said no. Would’ve been a good opportunity to teach them about taking your rubbish home. (Ryan’s mum)	
<p>theorist and current research</p>	Socio-cultural theorists like Vygotsky, Malaguzzi, Rogoff and Fler say learning comes from relationships and participation in cultural activities -which includes activities from children’s everyday lives.	



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 <p>a child</p>		
 <p>an educator</p>		
 <p>your families</p>		
 <p>theorist and current research</p>		



Complete your QIP

The information you write below can go directly into your QIP or Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) (NSW ONLY)
Instructions

For a MEETING QIP and Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)	For Exceeding the QIP and Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)
<i>Please give an example of a regular activity which teaches children to be responsible for and care for the natural environment.</i>	<i>Please discuss how educators' practice relating to sustainability and environmental responsibility reflects the service's philosophy.</i>
<i>Please give an example of an activity or experience where children learnt about the impact of human activity on the environment and the affect this has on other living things.</i>	<i>Please discuss how service/educators' practice is informed by current recognised guidance on environmental sustainability and caring for the environment.</i>
<i>Please give an example of an activity/experience where children learnt about the huge variety of animals, plants, insects etc and their habitats.</i>	<i>Please give an example of how you/your team support families to understand and engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.</i>
If you cannot answer these questions above the you are not meeting. This means you need to create an improvement plan and make changes to your practice	If you cannot answer these questions above the you are not exceeding. This means you need to create an improvement plan and make changes to your practice

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Checklist

Why are you doing the checklist?

The practices identified in the checklist are what the assessor needs to see you do so they can check you're 'meeting the NQS.' If you embed all the things in the checklist, then you are meeting the Element 3.2.3. If there's something on the checklist that you're not doing, then you need to either adjust your practice to do it, or ask for help and training to do what's on the checklist ie work with your educational leader or room leader who should teach/coach you how to do it.

The checklist keys to use.

E = Embedded I do that **ALL** the time

K = I know I need to do that, but I don't do it all the time

T = Please teach me how to do it or improve my understanding of why I need to do it.

Name Educator 1	
Name Educator 2	
Name Educator 3	
Name Educator 4	
Name Educator 5	

	ED1	ED2	ED3	ED4	ED5
Do you implement activities which help children appreciate, care for and increase their understanding of natural and man-made environments?					
Do you implement a variety of activities to help children learn more about plants and animals, and their habitats?					
Do you help children increase their understanding of how living things depend on each other and their environment?					
Do you help children increase their understanding of the way people impact and use the natural environment eg plastics in the environment, water conservation, renewable resources (wind, solar, hydro), deforestation, erosion, landfill, endangered animals/plants?					
Do you involve children in meaningful activities that increase their understanding of environmental issues, particularly those that may affect your local community?					
Do you involve children in meaningful activities that connect service operations with learning about environmental responsibility eg monitoring electricity, gas, water usage and amount of rubbish going to landfill?					
Do you use available spaces for activities that promote life skills like growing food and recycling?					
Do you ensure indoor and outdoor learning environments include lots of diverse natural materials?					

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