



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

QUALITY AREA 7

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER



The educational leader has an influential role in promoting positive outcomes for children and families. Effective educational leadership builds the capacity of educators by inspiring, motivating, affirming, challenging and extending their practice and pedagogy. This joint endeavour involves inquiry and reflection, and supports ongoing learning and professional development.

Things to consider:

- Is the educational leader role at the service clearly defined?
- How is the approved provider supporting the educational leader?
- What strategies is the educational leader using to support educators to implement the assessment and planning cycle?
- How are educators mentored?
- How are you creating and nurturing a professional learning community?

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The importance of educational leadership is reflected in Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), in particular:

Standard 7.2: Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

Element 7.2.2: The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.

Educational leadership is also integral to the outcomes of Quality Area 1:

Standard 1.1: The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.

Standard 1.2: Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.

Standard 1.3: Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Regulation 118: requires the approved provider to designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, coordinator or other individual as educational leader at the service to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service.

Regulation 148: requires the staff record includes the name of the person designated as the educational leader in accordance with Regulation 118.

“...studies show that leadership can positively impact on the quality of the centre as a workplace, the quality of the education provided and the developmental outcomes achieved by children over time.”

Waniganayake et al (2017)

ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER

The role of the educational leader is primarily to:

- collaborate with educators and provide curriculum direction and guidance
- support educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance programs and practices
- lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service
- ensure that children's learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the approved learning frameworks.

The educational leader also has a significant role in:

- guiding and developing educators and families' understandings about play and leisure-based learning, and the significance of the early years in the education continuum for children
- building the knowledge, skills and professionalism of educators
- building a culture of professional inquiry with educators, coordinators and staff members to develop professional knowledge, reflect on practice and generate new ideas.

SELECTING AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Neither the National Quality Standard nor the legislative requirements are prescriptive about the qualifications, experience or required skills for the person chosen to be the educational leader. The flexibility of these provisions allows approved providers to choose the person best suited to take on this role.

However, when selecting an educational leader, the following skills, knowledge and attributes might be considered:

- communication and interpersonal skills
- comprehensive knowledge of theory relating to childhood education and care (for example, child development, attachment, learning), professional standards and approved learning frameworks, and contemporary understanding of evidence-based best practice approaches to teaching and learning
- knowledge of leadership theory and the use of a range of leadership styles
- critical thinking skills, including the ability to analyse and challenge conventional practice and ideas
- a sense of purpose and direction, and the ability to influence
- a willingness to mentor and support educators from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of knowledge and experience
- a commitment to learning and participating in professional learning opportunities.

SUPPORTING THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Element 7.2.2 requires the educational leader to be supported in their role. This support could include:

- **Capacity building opportunities** – e.g. the opportunity to develop and build their knowledge, skills and competencies
- **Empowerment** – e.g. autonomy and professional influence to effectively undertake their role
- **Resourcing** – This could include:
 - clearly defined role description, expectations and outcomes
 - time
 - professional learning materials and opportunities
 - networking and collegial support opportunities.

Provision of support to the educational leader can, in turn, lead to capacity building and empowerment of educators.

EDUCATIONAL LEADER STRATEGIES

Pedagogical leadership – leading the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment, and the planning cycle – requires a unique set of professional skills. The most effective educational leader views their role as a collegial, joint endeavour, enacting their role through mentoring, guiding and supporting educators.

Strategies might include:

- mentoring and supporting educators' understanding of educational program and practice, e.g. building relationships and interactions with children to assist their learning through play and leisure-based programs; developing documentation that is meaningful, relevant and promotes reflection on educators' pedagogy and practice
- drawing on educators' strengths to develop professional skills and confidence
- mentoring and supporting educators to assess learning
- ensuring the assessment and planning cycle is applied to each child and the program as a whole (Note: [Some jurisdictions have different requirements](#) for the program in school age services)
- assisting educators to understand and implement reflective practice and leading critical reflection discussions to examine policies, programs and practice
- talking to families about the educational program.



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at acecqa.gov.au to download:

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

[Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework](#)

[Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care](#)

[The Educational Leader Resource](#)

Find other useful resources:

[Educational leadership and team building](#)

[Educational leadership videos](#)

[Quality Area 1 Resources](#)

[Quality Area 7 Resources](#)

Waniganayake, M., Cheeseman, S., Fenech, M., Hadley, F. & Shepherd, W. (2017) *Leadership: Contexts and complexities in early childhood education*. Oxford University Press: South Melbourne

We Hear You:

[The role of the educational leader series](#)

[Unpacking the planning cycle series](#)

[Uncovering the layers of reflective practice series](#)

More information is available on the ACECQA website acecqa.gov.au