

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

Section 3. Learning what is required for meeting.

The following section will show you exactly what to do to ensure your practice is meeting. You **do not** need to complete this section if you have successfully completed 'Section 2'.

Why is the element important?

Element 3.2.3 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.

What could potentially go wrong if educators didn't do the above?

As educators, it is essential to recognise the significance of supporting children in becoming environmentally responsible individuals. By doing so, we lay the foundation for a sustainable future. Failure to implement these principles could lead to several negative outcomes.

There may be a lack of environmental awareness among children. Without understanding the importance of environmental responsibility or the consequences of unsustainable practices, they may not feel motivated to act. Also a disconnection from nature can occur if children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to engage with the natural world and have hands-on experiences. This disconnection may result in a diminished sense of environmental stewardship and a decreased inclination to protect and care for the environment.

The absence of opportunities to explore environmental challenges and develop problem-solving skills. This can limit children's ability to address future environmental issues. Through environmental education, children gain valuable interdisciplinary learning experiences. Without incorporating sustainability into the curriculum, there is a risk of missed learning opportunities, where children are deprived of essential knowledge and skills related to environmental responsibility and sustainability.

Neglecting to prioritise teaching and modelling environmentally responsible behaviours. This can lead to a lack of personal responsibility among children. If educators fail to demonstrate sustainable habits and practices, children may not develop a sense of duty towards the environment, hindering the establishment of sustainable behaviours and attitudes.



You must practice

It's very important to make sure you and the service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

Provide hands-on experiences: Offer children opportunities to actively engage with nature, explore the environment, and participate in sustainable practices such as recycling and gardening. These experiences foster a deeper connection to the natural world and instil a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Model sustainable behaviours: Demonstrate environmentally responsible actions in your daily practices. By conserving energy, reducing waste, and showing respect for nature, you provide a powerful example for children to follow. Remember, they learn by observing and imitating.

Encourage a sense of connection: Foster in children an appreciation for the natural world and help them understand their role in caring for it. Encourage empathy towards plants, animals, and the environment, emphasising the intricate interdependence between all living things. By cultivating this sense of connection, children will be more inclined to protect and preserve the environment.

Incorporate environmental education: Integrate lessons and activities into the curriculum that promote environmental awareness and sustainability. Teach children about ecosystems, conservation, and the impact of human activities on the environment. This

interdisciplinary approach ensures that children develop a well-rounded understanding of environmental responsibility.

Encourage critical thinking: Engage children in meaningful discussions about environmental issues and encourage them to think critically about potential solutions. Empower them to ask questions, explore possibilities, and develop their own ideas for positive change. By encouraging their critical thinking skills, we equip children with the tools to become proactive agents of environmental stewardship.

The new EYLF and MTOP have introduced a theory called 'Place-based sciences.' This refers to an approach to education that integrates local environments, cultures, and communities into the learning process. It recognises the importance of connecting children, families, communities, and educators with their local surroundings and draws upon their collective knowledge and experiences, known as funds of knowledge. By incorporating these local funds of knowledge, place-based sciences create meaningful learning experiences that not only support academic growth but also contribute to the development of thriving learners and communities.

When educators leverage local funds of knowledge, they tap into the rich cultural and environmental resources that exist within a community. They recognise that children and families possess unique understandings, skills, and perspectives shaped by their lived experiences in that particular place. By incorporating this local knowledge into the curriculum, educators create opportunities for children to engage with familiar contexts, promoting a sense of relevance and authenticity in their learning.

Through place-based sciences, children explore and investigate their local environment, ecosystems, and community challenges. They learn about the interconnectedness of ecological systems, cultural heritage, and sustainable practices specific to their region. This approach encourages children to become active participants in addressing local issues, developing critical thinking skills, and fostering a sense of ownership and agency in their communities.

In place-based sciences, community connections are encouraged through partnerships and collaborations with local organisations, experts, and community members. Children engage in experiential learning activities, such as local excursions, community service projects, and interviews with local residents, which deepen their understanding of the community and its unique attributes.

After reading these points, which one(s) do you think you are doing well? Describe your practice in detail so it can go directly into your QIP or SAT (NSW only).

After reading these points, which one(s) do you think you need to work on? Describe how you could improve your practice.

Restoring the Health of Our Local Pond: A Place-Based Science Mission

We embarked on a place-based science project to address the environmental problem of water pollution in our local creek. Our group of children eagerly embraced the opportunity to become environmental problem solvers within our community. The project aimed to raise connections with our environment, families, and educators, while building upon the children's knowledge.

We began by discussing the importance of our local creek and the issue of water pollution. We learned that pollution from litter and runoff from nearby areas had harmful effects on the water quality and the ecosystem. To deepen our understanding, we invited families to share their knowledge and experiences related to water pollution and its consequences. Parents eagerly contributed by discussing the impact of pollution on aquatic life and the importance of clean water for all living things.

With our newfound knowledge and a determination to make a positive change, we set off on an excursion to the creek armed with gloves, nets, and determination. The children observed firsthand the litter that had accumulated in and around the water, such as plastic bottles and food wrappers. They were saddened by the sight and motivated to take action to restore the health of the pond.



Back in the classroom, we engaged in discussions about the causes and effects of water pollution. We brainstormed ideas on how we could contribute to solving this environmental problem. The children suggested organising a community clean-up event, spreading awareness through posters, drawings, and Instagram, and finding ways to prevent pollution in the first place.

To implement our ideas, we reached out to local community organisations and experts for guidance and support. Simone from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) visited our classroom to educate the children about the importance of clean water and ways to prevent pollution. The children eagerly absorbed the information, learning about responsible waste disposal, the harmful effects of chemicals, and the significance of keeping our water sources clean.

Follow up

Empowered with knowledge and armed with determination, we will be organising a community clean-up event with families, friends, and neighbours to remove litter and debris from the pond area.

Reflection

Through our place-based science project, we witnessed the transformative power of children taking action to address an environmental problem. The project not only sparked their awareness of water pollution but also instilled a sense of responsibility and empowerment in them. By incorporating their funds of knowledge and building connections within our community, we created a meaningful and impactful learning experience.

Throughout the project, we observed the children's growing understanding of the causes and effects of water pollution. They began to recognise their role in preventing pollution and felt a deep connection to the health of the pond and its inhabitants. We were delighted to see their enthusiasm and commitment to solving the environmental problem at hand.