

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Educational Program & Practice

Policy/Procedure Number: **QA1 - 1**

Policy/Procedure Requirement: National Quality Standards 1 & 7; Regulations 73 - 76 & 254

Policy Statement

To provide guidance for the Approved Provider, Educators, Coordinators and the Educational Leader in relation to Educational Program and Practice across the Service. The policy will be underpinned by:

- The Service's Philosophy
- The *Education and Care Services National Law*
- The *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- The National Quality Standard
- Relevant Policies of the Service

Rationale

The Approved Provider and the Service will have to ensure that education and care is provided by the FDC Educators in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for each child pre-school age and under, and My Time Our Place (MTOPI) for each school aged child.

Strategies and Practices

The Service will provide the Educators, Coordinators and the Educational Leader with appropriate guidance through policies, procedures and guidelines, and professional development.

Responsibilities of the Approved Provider:

The Approved Provider will:

Appoint the Nominated Supervisor, Coordinators and Educational Leader for the Service and will have in place appropriate policies, procedures and guidance materials so as to:

- Ensure that all necessary documents for each child attending the service are kept as required under Regulation 74
- Ensure that Educators are supported to develop and deliver quality educational programs and practices
- Ensure that the Educational Leader is supported in their role with opportunities for professional development, critical reflection, professional networking and ongoing learning
- Ensure that each Coordinator is supported in their role with opportunities for professional development and is assisted in their role to provide advice, support and mentoring to the FDC Educators
- Take immediate action where Educators, Coordinators or the Educational Leader are not willing or unable to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in this policy

Responsibilities of the Educational Leader:

The Educational Leader will:

- Support the continuous quality improvement process of the Service in relation to Quality Area 1
- Have an understanding of pedagogy and curriculum in the context of Early Childhood Education and Care
- Lead and take part in reflective practice discussions which are about the practices and implementation of the learning framework
- Provide guidance to FDC Educators on Educational Program and Planning
- Mentor Educators and Coordinators to ensure quality practices
- Network with other Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) professionals, allied health professionals and support services and agencies
- Consider how the Service can make effective connections to the local community
- Consider the continuity of learning for children in the Service who attend different ECEC programs, share FDC Educators and/or are transitioning to school
- Consider the benefits, disadvantages and ethics of implementing electronic programs into the Service
- Support the ongoing learning of Educators and Coordinators by identifying professional development opportunities, sourcing professional readings and encouraging professional conversations around quality programs and practices

Responsibilities of the Coordinators:

The FDC Coordinators will:

- Support the Educational Leader in their role
- Provide guidance to FDC Educators to develop and deliver quality educational programs
- Ensure that for each child pre-school age and under, the Educators document the assessment of the child's developmental needs, interests and participation in the educational program
- Ensure the FDC Educators assess each child's progress against the EYLF Learning Outcomes
- Provide guidance, including through the Service's *FDC Educator Diary & Planner* and the *FDC Educator Guide*, on how the documentation will be used by the Educators and how the information is prepared and shared with families
- Ensure, for each child over pre-school age, that there are evaluations of the child's wellbeing, development and learning
- Assist FDC Educators with the best methods of documenting and assessing children's play, learning and development
- Discuss the ways in which routines and transitions can be effective learning experiences for children
- Observe the Educator's and children's interactions, providing feedback on quality and intentional teaching
- Provide information to families about the ways in which FDC Educators may offer an educational program
- Provide supportive feedback to Educators when observing their practices in FDC environments on a regular basis

- Enter into professional discussions following reflection on practices and programs
- Advocate for the rights of children and families to engage with only quality educational programs and practices in all FDC environments
- Undertake professional development, build professional networks and carry out research relating to current trends for educational programs and practices

Responsibilities of FDC Educators:

FDC Educators will:

- Use the EYLF as the learning framework to inform the development of the Educator's program and to enhance the child's play, learning and development
- Recognise that all of the things that take place in a child's day in Family Day Care can contribute to their learning and developmental outcomes, and embed the Learning Outcomes in their program:
 - Learning Outcome 1 - Children have a strong sense of identity
 - Learning Outcome 2 - Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 - Learning Outcome 3 - Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 - Learning Outcome 4 - Children are involved and confident learners
 - Learning Outcome 5 - Children are effective communicators
- Regularly observe the children in their care, documenting each child's current knowledge, ideas, abilities, learning, play preferences and interests
- Provide environments which assist each child to take part in play and learning, while supporting them to '**belong**'. Factors which will be considered as '**environmental**' are indoor spaces, outdoor spaces, excursions and the educator's interactions in any of these areas
- Document the program, capturing each child's progress in respect to play, learning and development. The documentation will be shared with families in a manner in which they can engage with the information provided
- Support each child to participate in the program taking into consideration their age, developmental stage, disposition for learning, abilities and culture
- Support children to influence the program through the choices and decisions they make
- Be actively involved in all aspects of the program
- Undertake an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation
- Recognise intentional teaching opportunities, both planned and spontaneous
- Take part in professional development to continue on a path of life-long personal and professional learning
- Undertake critical reflection on a regular basis. The Educator's reflection should be documented in a way that can influence quality improvement in future educational program and practices
- Reflection could include the following areas:
 - Each Learning Outcome
 - Children's learning
 - Children's environments
 - Children's routines

- Children’s developmental areas
- Children’s play and leisure
- Children’s transitions
- Interactions with children and families
- Methods of documentation
- Observations
- Resources and equipment
- Educator’s or the Service’s philosophy

Service Guidance on Educational Program & Practice

The Service's guidance on Educational Program is based on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) with a strong focus on "**developmental**" and "**learning**" outcomes for children.

The EYLF informs and underpins the educational program and practice in our service and guides Educators' approach to children's learning, including intentional teaching, decision making and an ongoing cycle of observation.

The educational program and practice developed by Educators recognises children's **agency** from birth and demonstrates a commitment to listening to and respecting children (the pedagogy of listening). We **value** and **respect** children's evolving capacity, lived experiences, points of view and concerns. We are committed to its **social inclusion** agenda to support the inclusion and participation of every child and their family. Our educational programs and practices value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, identities and connections to community and country. We recognise the important role families have in children's childhoods and in supporting a child to identify with and make meaning of themselves and their world.

FDC Educator Role

The FDC Educator role is to provide "**education**" and "**care**"

- "**Education**" Role – To help each child achieve "learning" & "development" outcomes through the implementation of appropriate educational program and practice
- "**Care**" Role – To ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of each child whilst in care

Educational Framework

FDC caters predominantly to children preschool age or under, and hence the primary educational framework used in the Service is the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

- **Educational Program Objective**
 - To achieve **learning & development** outcomes for each child
- **Learning Outcomes** (5 outcomes)
 - Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
 - Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 - Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 - Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners
 - Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators
- **Developmental Outcomes** (5 outcomes)
 - Social
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Language
- **Learning Outcomes** are **qualitative**
- **Developmental Outcomes** are **age appropriate** and **measurable**

Service's Educational Program & Practice

The Service has designed and customised a FDC Educator Diary & Planner to support Educators in providing quality educational programs. The Diary & Planner contains a well-structured guide to the EYLF principles, practices, learning outcomes, and key learning areas; and uses learning stories as the basis for planning, observations and reflections for each month/ quarter.

The educational program and practice cycle is broken into 4 key parts:

1. Gain Information about Children's Learning & Development
 - Gather information about the child's learning & development
 - Identify areas for learning & development opportunities
2. Plan & Implement Program for Children's Learning & Development
 - Design (and document) play-based program to achieve this
 - Implement program with 'intentional teaching' as required to "scaffold" the child's learning
3. Observations & Learning Stories
 - Document "observations" and "learning stories"
 - Critical Reflection & "follow-up" for next round of programming
4. Follow up and Sharing information of Child's progress with families

Step 1: Gain Information about Children's Learning & Development

The first step is to gather information on each child's developmental and learning needs and interests. When thinking about what experiences / activities to implement on the curriculum plan, information or evidence needs to be gathered which supports children's learning and development.

The Service recommends the use of "developmental milestones" (EYLF Practice Based Resources - Developmental Milestones) to assess each child against the five developmental areas - physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language to gather information about a child's developmental/ learning needs.

The Service also recommends the collection of evidence and information from the following sources on each child's learning and developmental needs and interests.

- Children's Interests
- Child Input
- Extension Ideas
- Parent Input
- Daily Diary / Portfolio
- Observations
- Learning Stories
- Group Experiences
- Spontaneous Experiences

Step 2: Plan & Implement Program for Children's Learning & Development

Once the Educator has gathered the information on the child's learning and development needs and interests, the Educator can plan their programs.

The FDC Educator Diary & Planner provides a planning template for each quarter. The rationale for this is that a quarterly planning cycle can provide sufficient timeframe for measurable enhancement in the learning and developmental outcomes for children.

It also provides flexibility for Educators to have broader scope in their educational program planning. However, individual Educators may choose to have a shorter (e.g. monthly) program planning cycle.

Educator Practices

Planning for Children's learning should include Educator practices with Intentional Teaching - Educator actively promoting children's learning through challenging experiences and interactions (e.g. counting, shapes, music & movement, puzzles).

Intentional Teaching can include:

- creating a learning environment that is rich in materials and interactions – with opportunities for children to practice choosing, thinking, negotiating, problem solving and taking risks
- encouraging children to explore materials, experiences, relationships, and ideas through a variety of open-ended materials
- creating opportunities for inquiry – where children can ask questions, investigate, gather information, consider possibilities, form tentative conclusions and test and justify them
- actively 'joining in' children's play, 'tuning in' and respond to children's views and ideas
- modelling problem solving and challenging children's existing ideas about how things work - I'm wondering why the water keeps disappearing into the sand?

Intentional Teaching can be used to **scaffold the learning** for children (i.e. in response to children's evolving ideas and interests, educators assess, anticipate and extend children's learning via open-ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning). They should also make use of spontaneous 'teachable moments' to scaffold children's learning.

Physical Environment

In the planning for children's learning, physical environment plays a major role. Physical environments (e.g. indoor spaces, equipment and materials; outdoor spaces, equipment and materials; excursions) can offer children a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote their learning and development.

The way Educators design, equip and organise the environment significantly influences children's interaction with the space and resources.

Physical learning environments should have positive attributes, such as:

- flexibility and accessibility
- a range of developmentally appropriate, open-ended activities and sensory experiences
- one that is sustainable, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of families, encourages awareness of environmental responsibilities and implements practices that contribute to a sustainable future.

- children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment and encouraged to reduce waste, minimise consumption, protect and conserve wildlife and natural habitats.
- children develop positive attitudes and values about sustainable practices by engaging in learning experiences, joining in discussions that explore solutions to environmental issues, and watching adult's model sustainable practices.
- children learn to live interdependently with the environment.
- educators will promote a holistic, open ended curriculum which explores ideas and practices for environmental sustainability and helps children understand the interdependence between people and the environment by:
 - connecting children to nature through art and play and allowing children to experience the natural environment through natural materials like wood, stone sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, nesting boxes, a vegetable garden with gardening tools and watering cans.
 - developing education programs for water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction.
 - celebrating children's' environmental knowledge and sustainable activities.
 - involving children in nature walks, education about plants and gardening and growing plants and flowers from seed.
 - using resource kits and information on environmental issues
 - educators will model sustainable practices by embedding sustainability into all aspects of the daily running of the service operations including:
 - Recycling materials for curriculum and learning activities
 - Minimising waste and effectively using service resources
 - Turning off equipment and lights when not in use

Partnerships with Families and the Community

- educators will facilitate collaborative partnerships with local community groups to enhance and support children's' learning about sustainable practices.
- families will be encouraged to participate in decision making and information sharing about environmental sustainability through parent input forms, wall displays, etc.

Step 3: Observations & Learning Stories

Observations and Learning Stories are records of what the Educator has seen a child (or group of children) doing in an early childhood programme. Planned activities will be observed and recorded for follow up and reflections.

Observations:

- No specified amount of observations
- Quality not quantity important
- Record significant events for child
- Tailor methods of observation to each child
- Goal is to build an overall picture of each child – a holistic approach

Learning Stories:

- An effective, but not the only, way to document children's learning
- The written story can be as short as one paragraph. It is usually focussed on a specific incident or episode but it may also be a snapshot of a child's activities over a specific amount of time (e.g. 10 minutes). It may focus on a group activity (e.g. visiting a fire station or going on a walk)
- It becomes a 'learning' story when the Educator adds her interpretation of the child's Learning Outcome(s) highlighting what the child can do and is doing rather than what they can't do
- Learning Stories should be structured correctly
 - A title, name and date
 - Image/s to illustrate the point of the story
 - A story told subjectively, not objectively
 - A section with 'Analysis of Learning'
 - A section with 'Follow Up / Extension'
 - A section linking the observation to learning outcomes
 - A section on type of play eg dramatic play
- Learning Stories are family friendly and appealing to the eye but they must be correct, and not your only source of observations on children

Step 4: Follow up

The follow up activities will be based on:

- what worked?
- what can be done more next time? and
- how will it be done?

In addition, Educators will discuss each child's progress with the family on a regular basis. Educators must provide evidence via photographs, learning stories etc of each child's work to show what each child is learning, how they are developing and what particular learning interests them.

Parents/guardians will be consulted in the development of programs that are responsive to children's lives, interests and learning styles, and reflect children's family, culture and community.

Educators are required to prepare **Learning & Development Assessment Summary** outlining the learning & developmental outcomes for each child at the end of each calendar year and provide it to parents. It is also recommended the Educators do this 6-monthly from 2018.

Before a child starts school, Educators will prepare information about the child's learning and development to share with their new teacher. This will help ensure that the child's new school is well prepared to continue that child's learning.

Educators are required to provide parents with child's portfolios containing all relevant supporting documentation such as: developmental milestones, summatives, artwork, photographs etc upon child ceasing care or educator leaving the service.

Key Definitions

Assessment	Defined as the process of gathering ongoing and comprehensive information about aspects of a child's knowledge, development, skills, abilities, learning dispositions and behaviour for the purpose of making educational program and practice decisions.
Critical reflection	Defined as educators thinking about what they do in order to reconsider their actions and refine their program and practices in accordance with these thoughts. Educators undertake a cycle of ongoing learning – a process of quality improvement.
Curriculum	Defined as 'all interactions, experiences, activities routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development' (The Early Years Learning Framework, 2009).
Intentional teaching	Defined as 'educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions' (The Early Years Learning Framework, 2009). Intentional teachers are all educators who support children to learn through planned and spontaneous play.
Pedagogy	Defined as 'early childhood educator's practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning' (The Early Years Learning Framework, 2009).

Resources and Further Readings

- The Service's Philosophy
- The Education and Care Services National Law
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations
- The National Quality Standard

Related FDC Policies, Procedures & Documents

- Governance & Management: Staffing

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Next Review: