Document 1
PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

As pedagogical leaders[1], qualified educators have a professional responsibility to mentor colleagues in using the Framework and the Guide. It is important that they emphasise that both documents need to be interpreted in ways that are relevant to local contexts. They may also want to remind colleagues that:

- there is no one right way to use the Framework or the Guide
- making constructive, sustainable changes in professional practice requires ongoing commitment
- decisions about where to start are best made by educators themselves.

Pedagogical leadership establishes a culture of professionalism in the setting. It involves communicating to families, other educators and the broader community the importance of high quality learning experiences for all children and contributing to a greater understanding of the complexity and value of early childhood education. The Framework and Guide can support this communication.

The contributions of pedagogical leaders are detailed in the table that follows.

Contributions of Pedagogical Leaders	
Model professional and ethical practice	▪ Promote the use of the Early Childhood Australia's *Code of Ethics* as a guide for pedagogical decisions ▪ Invite critical reflection and conversations that allow consideration of different perspectives and approaches ▪ Use their knowledge of current research and practice to inform discussions and decision-making ▪ Clearly articulate their learning and teaching intentions through documenting plans and evaluations of learning experiences ▪ Justify their decisions about the theoretical perspectives and philosophical approaches they adopt
Mentor others	▪ Facilitate others' learning through professional conversations, sharing resources, and coaching ▪ Actively contribute to the ongoing development of early childhood settings as learning communities ▪ Establish networks with other professionals, including internet-based networks to connect professionals working in isolated settings

[1] Pedagogical leaders take an active role in promoting early childhood professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning. More details can be found in Table.

Commit to ongoing professional learning and enquiry	▪ Actively seek out a range of professional learning experiences ▪ Participate in practitioner inquiry
Build partnerships with colleagues, families, schools, community workers and allied health professionals to promote the best learning opportunities for all children	▪ Create opportunities for exchanging ideas and sharing curriculum knowledge and for clarifying intentions and expectations ▪ Communicate the importance of relationships, listening and play in children's learning
Act as advocates	▪ Advocate for children in their community contexts and in their transitions to other settings to ensure that their learning needs are well represented ▪ Advocate for high quality early childhood settings by promoting greater understanding of the lifelong benefits to all children ▪ Advocate for the early childhood profession

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 2

LINKS TO CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Belonging, *being* and *becoming* are ways of thinking about children's entitlements as unique persons, active participants in their families and communities and capable learners from birth. Children are belonging, being and becoming all the time in ways that are indivisible and interconnected. This understanding is central to the Framework and acknowledges:

- early childhood as a valuable time in its own right, a time which offers unique challenges and opportunities for children and those with whom they have relationships
- children's learning and development as meaningful in the here and now and as a foundation for their lives in the future
- the diverse ways children experience belonging, being and becoming
- the significance of children's many belongings, first through their relationships and learning within families, which are their first and most important educators, and later through their participation and relationships in early childhood settings and the broader community
- that each day is important and that experiences which are spontaneous, enjoyable and meaningful add to the quality of children's days and their learning.

Understanding of the importance of children's belonging, being and becoming resonates across many cultures and theoretical perspectives.

Educators demonstrate their understanding of how belonging, being and becoming are integral to each of the five learning outcomes by:

- respecting and responding to children's individual personalities, dispositions for learning, strengths, abilities, interests and multiple ways of learning and expressing learning
- recognising the significance of these ideas for children's wellbeing, positive sense of identity and confidence as learners and participants in their communities
- trusting children's competence, agency, capacity for self direction and ability to make decisions about their own learning
- allowing children unhurried time to enjoy everyday experiences
- collaborating respectfully with children, families and community members to provide learning experiences that build on or bridge the learning that children bring from home and community contexts to early childhood settings.

Learning transforms or changes children's ways of belonging and being and who they will become. The brief discussion that follows illustrates the interconnection of *belonging*, *being*

and *becoming* and the five learning outcomes. It also highlights the integrated and holistic nature of children's learning.

Learning outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

In early childhood settings children experience *belonging* when they build on the attachments they have with family and close friends and develop attachments with peers and educators. They use these relationships as a safe base for exploration, to work collaboratively and to learn from each other.

Being involves children's growing understanding and appreciation of themselves as unique individuals through experiencing affirmation and respect. This is the foundation for becoming more aware of self and seeing and respecting others. The concept of *being* reminds educators to focus on children in the here and now.

Becoming includes children re-shaping their identities when situations and relationships change, such as when moving into full-time school. Children are learning about the impact of their personal beliefs, values and contributions to the broader community. Children's agency as well as guidance, care and teaching by families and educators shape children's experiences of becoming.

Learning outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Experiences of relationships and participation in communities, including the community of the early childhood setting, contribute to children's *belonging, being and becoming*. Through these experiences of caring and being cared for they learn about themselves (their being) in relation to others.

Children's connectedness and different ways of belonging with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of being which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities. Over time this learning transforms the ways they interact with others and deepens their understandings that there are diverse ways of *belonging, being and becoming*.

Children's experiences as valued contributors in families and other social groups support their understandings, capacities and interest in being and becoming participants with others.

Learning outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Before they are born, children belong to families, communities and country. Feeling a strong sense of belonging through experiencing and contributing to respectful, sensitive relationships is fundamental to children's wellbeing. Children's sense of wellbeing is also supported by holistic approaches to learning which affirm all aspects of their being: physical, emotional, social, cognitive, creative, linguistic and spiritual.

Children's developing resilience and their ability to take increasing responsibility for self-help and basic health routines promote a sense of independence and confidence. At the same time, as they experience being cared for by educators and others, they become aware of the importance of living and learning interdependently with others.

Learning outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Through *belonging* to communities of learning children learn skills, attitudes and knowledge and acquire dispositions for learning. Connections and continuity between learning experiences in different settings make learning more meaningful and increase children's feelings of belonging.

Children understand themselves and their world through active, hands-on investigation, often with deep concentration and complete focus on what captures their interests. They have many different ways of seeing the world, different processes of learning and their own preferred learning styles. They bring their *being* to their learning.

Active involvement in learning builds children's understandings of concepts and the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for lifelong learning. This active involvement helps to shape their identities. They can challenge and extend their own thinking and that of others and create new knowledge in collaborative interactions and negotiations. Children's active involvement changes what they know, can do and value and transforms the ways that they learn.

Learning outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Communication is an essential component of children's *belonging, being* and *becoming.*

They feel a sense of belonging when their language, interaction styles, and ways of communicating and expressing ideas are valued and when educators encourage them to use their first language.

Children are social and creative beings and use verbal and non-verbal language, music, dance and drama to express themselves, connect with others and share ideas and feelings. Over time, these ways of being are transformed through their participation with others, intentional teaching and play.

Communication is critical for *becoming*, learning new skills and dispositions, gaining new knowledge. Children's *becoming* is reflected in their many ways of communicating, as they demonstrate what they know and can do.

Educators' belonging, being and becoming

Belonging, being and becoming are also relevant to the professional lives of educators. For example:

Belonging relates to connections and relationships with other educators and professionals from other disciplines, participation in professional organisations and networks, and community involvement.

Being relates to the individuality of each early childhood educator and to the distinctiveness of each team of educators. Individuals and groups bring a unique collection of beliefs, values, interests, knowledge, experience and perspectives to planning, practice and relationships.

Becoming relates to the imperative to continue to learn and reflect in order to increase professional knowledge and improve skills and practices.

Reflective questions

- How might you use the concepts of *belonging*, *being* and *becoming* to communicate with families about the curriculum in your setting?
- Do children have time to just be during the day? How would you describe these experiences? Are they valuable? If so, in what ways?
- How do the concepts of *belonging*, *being* and *becoming* relate to your professional life? What possibilities do they offer for change?

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 3
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Early childhood educators have a responsibility to learn throughout their professional lives so that they can continue to develop effective ways to enhance children's learning and wellbeing. Research evidence shows that reflective practice can help educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work and motivate them to explore new ideas and approaches[1].

Reflective practice, a key principle in the Framework, is important in professional learning because it assists educators to:

- respond thoughtfully and with integrity to complex situations and challenges
- make careful and well-informed decisions and plans
- implement and evaluate changes in their practices and policies
- be accountable to families, colleagues and communities for their choice of approaches and methods
- improve learning experiences and outcomes for children.

Reflective practice as a 'way of being and doing' involves educators:

- understanding that there are rarely straightforward solutions or final answers to problems, difficult situations or dilemmas
- questioning practices and assumptions that are often taken for granted
- identifying the values and beliefs that underpin their practice and being willing to rethink these
- using systematic and logical approaches to problem solving – as well as imagination, intuition and inspiration
- justifying reasons for actions on ethical and moral grounds
- continually searching for new understandings and carefully considering how these fit with existing knowledge, including knowledge from research evidence.

Reflection is central to reflective practice. It means

> "… looking back on experiences in a way that informs practice, learning in the midst of practice, and/or making informed decisions about what to do, when to do it, and why it should be done."[2]

Reflection can vary in focus, as the following table shows. All three types of reflection – technical, practical and critical − can be valuable. The chart includes questions that encourage different kinds of reflection. Critical reflection is emphasised because it focuses on the rights of all children to become successful learners.

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[1] See, for example, Anning, A. & Edwards, A. (2006). Promoting children's learning from birth to five: Developing the new early years professional. 2nd Ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

[2] Jay (2003) in Perry (2004) p. 140 Perry, R. (2004). *Teaching practice for early childhood: A guide for students 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge Farmer.*

Types of Reflection[3]

Focus	Examples of Questions
Technical reflection What works? Aims to find answers from existing knowledge	• What planning system works best with this group of children? • What can we do to help Kristina, who has only recently started here, to settle more easily? • What strategies can we use to encourage Karim's family to share information about his learning at home?
Practical reflection Why are things happening as they are? Aims to develop new insights (from deeper understandings or different interpretations) within existing frames of reference	• Why is our planning system not working as effectively as we would like it to? What other approaches could we consider? • What might be causing Kristina to become distressed? Are there any patterns in when she settles well that could be built on? • Are our ways of interacting contributing to Karim's family not sharing information with us?
Critical reflection What are the implications for equity and social justice? Aims to increase awareness of bias and inequities by transforming frames of reference	• Is our planning system leading us to overlook, underestimate or discriminate against some children because of their background or abilities? How can we make sure that our planning is based on expectations that all children can be successful learners? • Do some of our practices that we have taken for granted show a lack of cultural sensitivity? Could Kristina's distress be a sign that she is feeling excluded? • What assumptions do we bring to our interactions with families, particularly families whose backgrounds are different from our own? Are our assumptions limiting the range of families with whom we have respectful and trusting relationships?

Reflective practice is more likely to lead to change when it is undertaken collectively rather than by individuals in isolation. Creating and sustaining a culture of inquiry requires:

- *commitment* to inquiry at the organisational level
- *courage* to question 'truths'
- *respect* for different viewpoints

[3] Van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *6*(3), 205-228.

- *opportunities* for all educators to contribute to discussions and debates
- *recognition* that there is no one right approach or answer
- *trust* and *collegiality* so that educators feel able to talk about their concerns and the challenges they face
- *time* for reflection and time to develop skills in a range of approaches to reflective practice (for example, journal writing, critical conversation groups).

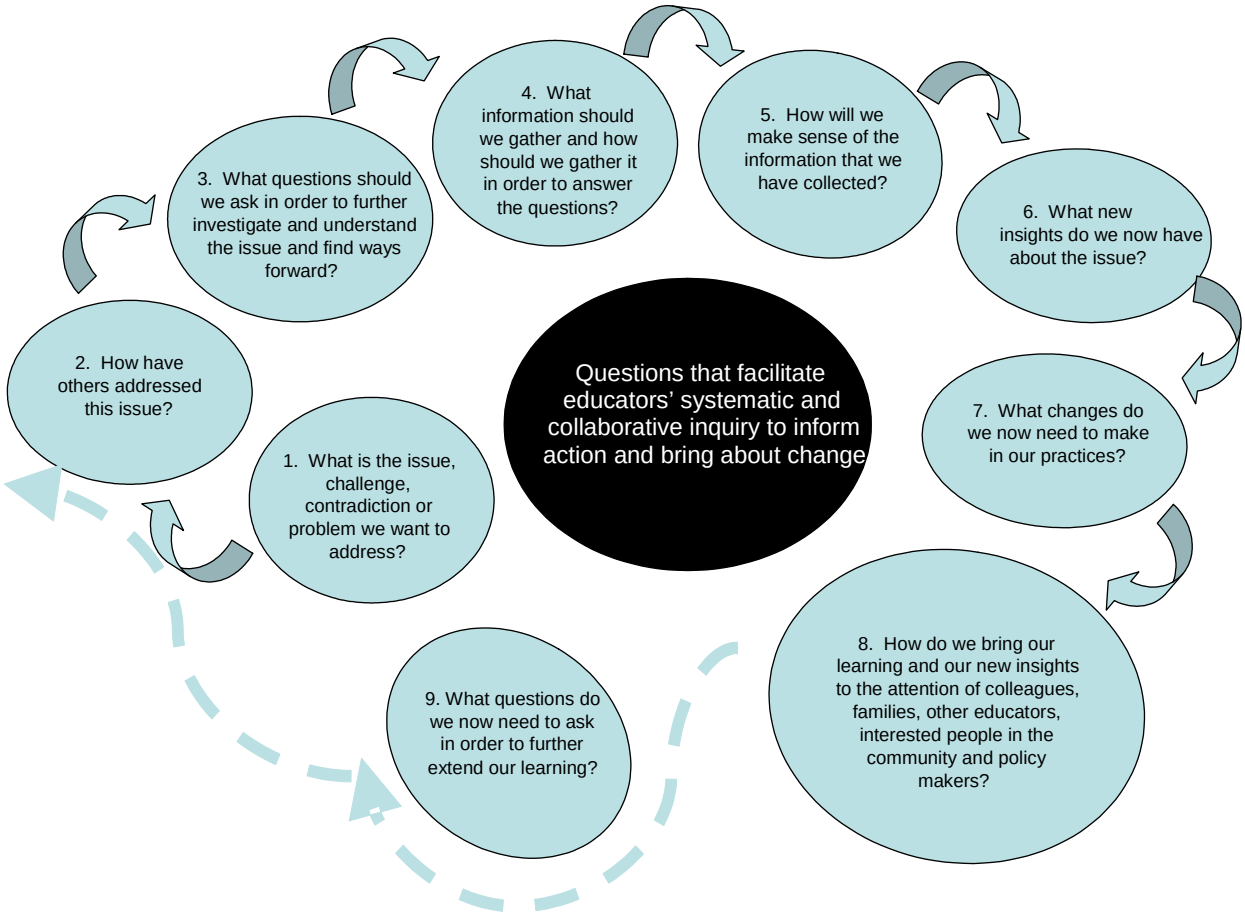
Practitioner inquiry

Practitioner inquiry, sometimes called action research, is a form of reflective practice. It involves educators researching aspects of their practice so that they can improve what they do. Participating in practitioner inquiry can help educators to:

- develop new insights into what they do and why they do it
- try out and evaluate new ideas and approaches
- generate new knowledge and new practices relevant to the contexts in which they work.

The diagram below illustrates how practitioner inquiry is a spiral process of questioning, reflecting and acting.

Practitioner inquiry: processes and questions



How do babies communicate? An example of practitioner inquiry

A group of educators who were working with babies aged four to six months became curious about how very young babies communicate vocally to express their feelings and attract attention. (Step 1 in diagram.) They searched for information about early communication and read about the importance of reciprocity and turn-taking. They also read about the need for adults to communicate in ways that convey respect, empathy and understanding for babies, for babies to feel secure. (Step 2) They knew that crying is an effective way for babies to communicate what they want. However, they wanted to find out more about other vocal cues used by babies (Step 3).

The educators decided to record the communicative sounds that each baby made during 'observational' periods in the activities and routines of the day. (Step 4) From these records, they grouped the sounds into categories that included crying, screaming, burbling and squealing. They also identified the frequency with which individual babies used particular sounds. (Step 5) This process helped them gain detailed insights into the communication styles of these babies and more knowledge about babies' communicative capacities in general. (Step 6)

To help them understand more fully the messages that the babies were conveying, the educators discussed the evidence they had gathered with the babies' families. They also asked families for more information and advice about strategies they could use to respond to babies' communications. Sharing evidence with families and asking families for information and advice led to so many new insights, as well as so many other benefits, that educators decided to continue this practice. (Step 7)

The educators wrote a report for their organisation's newsletter about how they had learned to engage in more purposeful and meaningful communication with babies. The report led to changes in practices with babies throughout the organisation. The educators also spoke about their practitioner inquiry project at several conferences. (Step 8) They continued to investigate different aspects of their work with babies. One of the next questions they investigated was 'What can we do to respond in a more empathetic way to individual babies?' (Step 9) Over time, they developed a wealth of specialist knowledge and their work attracted increasingly wide recognition.

References and resources

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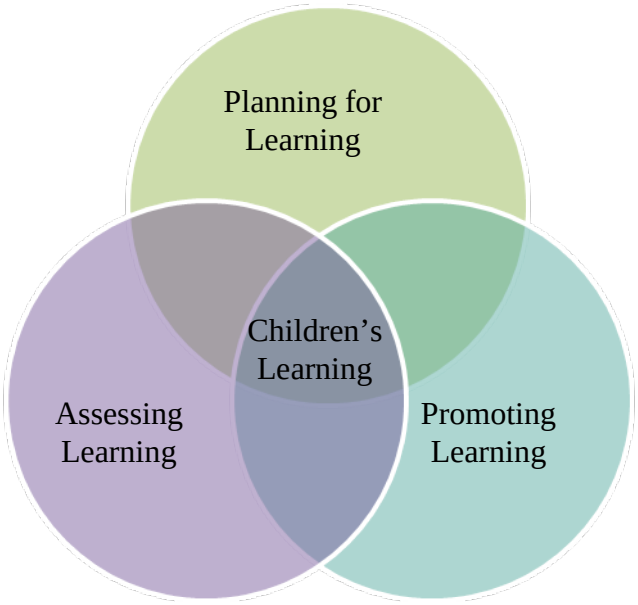
(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 4
CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING

Developing meaningful curriculum involves interactive decision-making by children, parents and families, educators and the broader community with the aim of fostering children's learning. Educators integrate their knowledge of the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the Framework to make curriculum decisions. This involves three interconnected processes: planning for learning, promoting learning and assessing learning. The Framework supports these processes by providing a 'scaffold' or 'frame' upon which to develop high quality curriculum for young children.

Processes of Curriculum Decision-making



(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 5

PLANNING FOR LEARNING

When *planning for learning* – and in *promoting learning* and *assessing learning* – educators draw on:

Their professional knowledge
Educators' professional knowledge about children, children's learning and development, curriculum content and pedagogy assists them to make informed decisions. For example, because they know that children's learning is holistic, they give priority to integrated learning experiences. Their knowledge of child development helps to plan learning experiences of sufficient complexity to extend children's learning and to make informed decisions about resources to support children's learning. Knowledge of curriculum content helps them to balance opportunities for children to develop their emerging understandings and skills in literacy, numeracy, the arts, science and technology. Their knowledge of pedagogy assists the planning of learning experiences that enable children to make decisions and to see themselves as successful learners. Educators' professional knowledge base is enriched when they draw on a range of theoretical perspectives, as each perspective can contribute different insights to planning decisions.

Their understanding of the children and families who participate in the setting and the communities in which the setting is embedded
To ensure that their planning is responsive to the interests and needs of children, families and communities, educators talk with children and families to determine what children already know and can do and what interests they bring to their learning. They consult with families and communities about the aspirations and priorities that families and communities have for their children and incorporate these into their planning. They value and draw on the knowledge and ideas of families and communities, including culturally specific knowledge about childhood, children and learning.

Their understanding of the strengths, needs and interests of the individual children and groups of children with whom they work
Children of all ages bring their own 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 200l), including their experiences and values, to the early childhood setting. Through their relationships and interactions with children and through careful observations of children's learning and development, educators develop in-depth knowledge of the strengths, needs and interests of individual children and groups of children. This knowledge helps them to 'tap into' children's passions and to use everyday play experiences to extend children's ideas and understandings. The different perspectives and interests that children bring to the learning experience provide the basis for meaningful learning.

Their commitment to equity
Educators, who recognise that curriculum decisions are grounded in beliefs, values and assumptions that can potentially advantage some children or groups of children and marginalise others, think deeply about their planning. They ensure that it reflects their high expectations of all children's capacities to be successful learners and conveys respect for

different cultures, ways of knowing and abilities. They build into their planning ways of challenging stereotyping (for example on the basis of religion, ability, class or gender) and other forms of bias.

Their understanding of the learning outcomes in the Framework
Educators who understand that the learning outcomes in the Framework are intended to be interpreted in ways that are relevant to local contexts use them to guide rather than direct their planning. They realise that they can adapt and extend the learning outcomes, if needed, to better suit the children and families with whom they are working, or to focus on particular outcomes or components of outcomes for a substantial period of time. Their planning reflects their careful professional judgment.

Recording planning decisions
Maintaining written records of planning decisions helps educators to reflect on the range and type of experiences that they provide, the degree to which children are engaged in learning experiences, the types of strategies that they might use to promote children's learning and the effectiveness of these strategies. These records help educators to explain what they are doing and why, and to demonstrate how they contribute to children's learning.

Possibilities for recording curriculum decisions include:

- *daily diaries* that show plans and retrospective insights of educators. Combining the best ways of forward planning along with analysis of the spontaneous learning that takes place throughout the day, daily diaries contribute to a fuller understanding of how everyday events contribute to the learning process.
- *curriculum webs*, a method of capturing the ideas of educators, children and families when considering the learning potentials of topics and ideas
- *journals* shared between families and educators to record children's involvement in daily experiences and the thinking of those involved. This can be a particularly good way of recording curriculum decisions and involvement for babies and children with additional needs, who may not be able to report on their experiences.

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 6

PROMOTING LEARNING

Educators intentionally promote children's learning through

- relationships
- play
- environments
- experiences and teaching strategies.

Promoting learning through relationships

Children do not learn in isolation. Their learning takes place through relationships and the responses and reactions that they give to and receive from others. An early childhood setting can be thought of as a community of learners. Within such learning communities the unique cultures, beliefs and practices that are represented in the setting and wider community can be used as the basis for facilitating children's learning. Educators, in collaboration with other members of the learning community, negotiate pathways for children to move toward achieving learning outcomes that are culturally and contextually relevant.

Building relationships takes time, energy and commitment. Educators use their knowledge of local communities and contexts to devise ways to establish and build relationships with children, families and the broader community, for example through meetings, social occasions and open days. Building the genuine relationships needed for learning communities requires a willingness to balance professional knowledge and the contributions that children, families and other community members and professionals bring to the learning environment. Relationships can be strengthened and enriched over time through informal conversations, sharing observations and assessment of children's learning and discussing children's work. Having ethical relationships with families involves listening and responding to their concerns and priorities and respecting them as the key decision makers for their child.

Promoting learning through play

The play of young children includes sensory play, physical play, exploratory problem-solving play, social play and pretend play. Babies are intrinsically motivated to play, and the pleasure of play stimulates learning. They play for pleasure as well as to explore and investigate.

The first months and years are a time of sensory delight, discovery and wonder as babies respond to the touch, tastes, smells, sounds, sights and movement in their world. The sensory play of young children provides them with opportunities to integrate information and make connections between input from multiple sources, as they reach for the object they spy, or shake the toy that rattles. Soft rugs, music, birdsong, breeze and the touch of the warm sun, wrapping paper, small spaces, cardboard boxes, spoons and pots, plants and the animal world, a lullaby, gentle rocking and the scent of blossom all invite exploration.

The problem-solving, exploratory play of young children helps to satisfy their need to know as they explore and manipulate objects to discover their properties and purposes. Shaking, batting and dropping objects, tipping out containers, pulling things apart, fitting things together, shaking and pushing along objects, interactive toys, and hiding and seeking are all part of young children's early investigations.

Young children's physical play expresses their need to experiment with new skills and practise developing physical skills as they reach out, roll over, clap hands, climb up and down, roll down a hill, chase a leaf and run.

Young children's social play provides a context for their social development as they engage in reciprocal, interactive and, at times, complex games. Games such as peek-a-boo, hide-and-seek and give-and-take provide young children with opportunities to develop a sense of social relations.

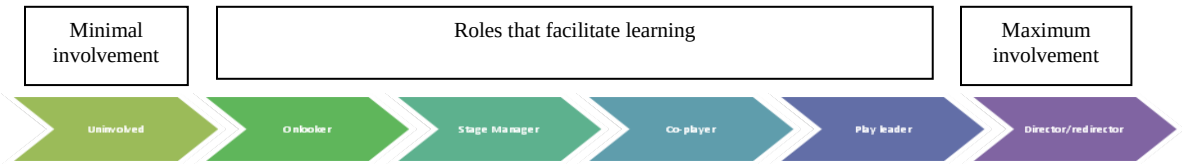
Once young children make mental images of their experiences they draw on these and begin to engage in pretend play using real and representative objects.

Educators need to ensure that young children have enough time, space and resources to play safely with or near each other so that the environment does not compromise their developing social skills.

By being responsive to the cues of babies and young children and having optimistic expectations for all children, educators support children's understandings that they can participate in, contribute to and shape their world.

Interacting in children's self-initiated and self-directed play

Educators' roles in facilitating children's learning through self-initiated and self-directed play can be thought of as a continuum. Some are more likely to facilitate children's learning than others (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2004).



Educators make professional decisions about when to lead a learning experience and when to leave the children to take the lead based on knowledge of the children and close observation of each learning situation. There is subtle but intentional 'dance' between the child and the educator (Laevers, 1995).

Learning that is initated by children can develop into complex learning when children work together on a project or shared experience. At these times educators can observe, assist children to access props and resources and at times enter the play and join in as a partner. This child-initiated learning requires the educator to step back and trust the children's abilty to guide the learning. This is a recognition of the child as teacher and learner – taking control of their own learning.

At other times educators will recognise opportunites to suggest a learning experience or provide materials and resources that invite children to investigate or develop a new play idea. Their support on these occassions will vary according to the interest and persistence of the children. Educators will closely observe the play and when required make decisions about how they can make more active interventions to assist or support the experience along. In each situation educators are actively involved in planning, decision-making and assessing the learning that is taking place.

The work of Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden & Bell (2002) suggests that most learning happens in situations where children initiate the learning experience, that is sensitively responded to and extended by the educator through: direct instruction, questioning, provoking thinking, joining in as a partner in the play, or sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004)[1].

Promoting learning through environments

Educators are architects of early childhood learning environment in settings. They play a vital role in determining how the physical and social environments, as well as the organisation of time, contribute to children's learning. They take into account local conditions, unique features of each setting, the ages of children and available resources in making decisions about the environment. Educators' decisions about the environment reflect their beliefs and values and the philosophy of the setting. Environments have such rich potential to influence learning that they are sometimes referred to as a third teacher (along with the child and the educator).

An intriguing and inviting environment prompts children's interest in exploring and investigating and provides opportunities for children to follow their interests and take a lead in developing play ideas. A crucial role for educators is to create learning environments that give all children, including those with additional needs, opportunities to learn from active participation and engagement.

Physical environments that support learning are inviting and engaging. They:

- invite children to spend time both indoors and outdoors
- invite children to engage – that is, are interesting and inspiring
- contain aesthetic elements that reflect children's interests and passions

[1] Sustained shared thinking involves both parties contributing their ideas, with each building on and extending children's thinking through conversations, collaboration over a task, support and scaffolding ideas and hypotheses.

- contain elements of children's lives outside the setting that are familiar to them
- reflect the cultural diversity of the community as well as exposing children to cultural contexts other than their own
- are set up to invite families to participate in relaxed and unhurried ways.

enable children to take the lead in developing play and learning ideas. They:

- allow children to create their own learning spaces and contribute to planning the physical environment
- enable children to initiate learning and access a range of materials
- reflect a balance between the need for organisation and the messiness that results when children play, experiment and explore
- respect children's capacities and potentials and allow every child access to all experiences or areas.

promote learning across all of the learning outcomes. They:

- give equal attention to all learning areas and promote rich and diverse experiences
- include materials that enhance children's learning in each of the learning outcome areas
- reflect the natural world and support learning about, caring for and sustaining the local and global environments.

Social environments that support learning:

- allow for secure attachments to develop and strengthen over time – that is, there are familiar adults available
- enable children to watch the play of others until they feel confident to join in
- give children choices about engaging with others or playing safely on their own
- acknowledge the power of one-to-one interactions
- enable children to choose who they spend their time with
- provide opportunities for children to make and sustain friendships
- offer opportunities for siblings to spend time together
- allow for individual as well as small group experiences.

Table: Reflecting on the social and physical environment at your setting

Structure of the day:
▪ How does the structure of the day and use of time inhibit or enhance children's learning? ▪ Are there sufficiently large blocks of time for older children to immerse themselves in learning? ▪ What does the rhythm of the day feel like: for staff; for children? Is there a balance of opportunities for large groups, small groups and individual learning; noisy and quiet times; familiar and new opportunities? ▪ Is there a balance between the need for a predictable routine with flexibility to take account of children's individual rhythms, moods and changes in weather or significant events?
Children's autonomy and choices
▪ To what extent can children make decisions about moving from one segment of the day to another? How do educators show respect for children when they need to interrupt their play? ▪ How can children make choices about resources? Do they have sufficiently ready access to the resources they want and need? How might choice be enhanced in this setting? ▪ How do educators encourage children to participate in and take responsibility for keeping the environment safe and reasonably clean and organised? ▪ How does the environment facilitate the inclusion of every child? What changes could be made to make the environment more accessible?
Aesthetics
▪ What messages does the environment convey? Does it provide a balance of richness and variety without being overwhelming? Does it reflect the ages and interests of the children and contain culturally relevant elements? ▪ How does the noise level impact on children's moods? Are there sufficient spaces and moments of peace and quiet during the day? Are there places for rigorous and noisy play that does not interrupt others? ▪ Are equal time and resourcing given to the outdoors? What potential does the outdoors hold that may not be fully realised?

Promoting learning through experiences and teaching strategies
Educators plan for a balance of types of experiences including child-initiated, child-guided and adult-guided. Child-guided experiences and adult-guided experiences are not highly controlled. Educators take on intentional roles in child-guided experiences and children play active and important roles in adult-guided experiences (Epstein, 2007).

Experiences that enhance learning:

- arise in response to children's interests and life experiences and from areas of interest that are introduced by educators
- encourage children's deep engagement

- involve ideas and topics that are worthy of their children's consideration and time.

Teaching strategies that enhance learning

Educators facilitate children's learning when they carefully match the teaching strategy they select to what is to be learned. Teaching strategies that educators can use include:

- *challenging,* in the context of secure relationships, educators know when to offer challenges and opportunities for children to extend their skills and ideas. Educators can extend children's thinking through questioning and reflection.
- *co-constructing*, working together with children to investigate and explore ideas. Educators take their ideas and those that children bring and build on them to discover new possibilities and develop and test hypotheses.
- *collaborating*, or enabling children to take the lead in an investigation or an idea while working alongside them to contribute to, rather than dominate, the direction of the experience. This can also include involving others, such as family members and members of the community, who may have particular expertise or knowledge that can inform the learning.
- *encouraging and supporting*, particularly when children are making an effort, through making comments that motivate children and encourage them to persist
- *explaining*, or making ideas and requests clear for children. This is useful at times when children want or need to understand a concept or idea, often in relation to their own and others' safety or rights.
- *identifying*, drawing children's attention to new ideas and topics. Pointing out things of interest may generate areas for exploration and investigation.
- *interacting* in children's self-initiated and self-directed play.
- *imagining*, creating an environment where children are encouraged to use imagination and creativity to investigate, hypothesize and express themselves. Educators plan for children to have opportunities where there is freedom to engage in experiences with no set expectations for outcomes and where children can explore their own possibilities.
- *instructing*, using techniques that engage and are respectful of children's ideas. Educators use direct instruction when other strategies might not be appropriate. For example, teaching children about road safety on an outing requires educators to be clear about their expectations for children and to identify the safe practices needed in these types of situations.
- *introducing* unfamiliar concepts, activities and materials to enhance learning and to assist children to respond positively to change.

- *listening*, deeply and thoughtfully, to encourage children to lead conversations. Through actively responding to children's contributions, educators create opportunities for authentic sustained shared conversations.
- *making connections*, assisting children to see relationships and incongruities. Educators contribute to children's thinking by comparing and contrasting.
- *modeling* or demonstrating a skill or how a task is done. Modeling should always be supported with opportunities for children to have a go themselves and practise the skill.
- *negotiating*, enabling children to have a go at solving problems and addressing complex issues. Educators provide scaffolding to allow children to see multiple sides to an argument or issue and encourage children to find reasonable solutions that can address their own and others' perspectives.
- *providing for choice* through recognizing children's capacities to make safe choices and experience the consequences of their actions. Provisions for choice need to be well considered in the context of the relationships and should not place children at risk or in danger. Supporting children to make choices is valuable when autonomy and independence are encouraged.
- *questioning* sensitively to engage children in thinking and problem solving and encouraging children to ask questions of themselves and other children. Questions that are genuine and respectful are the most effective.
- *researching*, working with children to find out and investigate. This can involve asking others, using the internet and local library or telephoning relevant agencies. Researching helps children learn about the many ways of finding solutions and gathering information.
- *revisiting and revising*, taking the opportunity to look back at experiences and thinking, which enables children to reflect on and build on prior learning.
- *scaffolding*, using knowledge of children's abilities. Educators can break down tasks and ideas and provide children with a supportive framework for taking the next steps or moving onto a higher level of thinking.

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 7
LINKING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICE

Educators can draw on many theories to inform and guide their practice. Theories provide different lenses through which to interpret and gain insight into complex issues. Like different pairs of glasses, theories enable educators to see the world differently. Educators can use theories to assist them to make sense of and respond to different circumstances and contexts. Because all theories have strengths and limitations, it is preferable for educators to use a range of theories rather than relying only on one.

The following table provides a guide to some commonly used theories. It is not meant to convey rigid divisions, as some theories have common features and interpretations of some theories and theorists change over time. For example, Vygotsky contributed to developmental theory but is now commonly seen as a socio-culturalist theorist.

Table Y: Commonly used theoretical perspectives
(Adapted from *Waterfalls* and the Queensland Early Years Curriculum documents)

Theoretical perspective	Examples of theorists	Key ideas	Pedagogical practices (teaching, learning and assessment)
Behaviourist theories	Skinner	Behaviour is learned and can also be unlearned. Inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour can be replaced by appropriate/acceptable behaviour. Changes in children's behaviour occur because of the responses they get to their behaviour.	Educators reinforce appropriate/desired behaviour through rewards. Rewards can range from a positive statement about a child's behaviour to tangible rewards such as star charts. Educators avoid reinforcing inappropriate/undesirable behaviour. For example, they might ignore the behaviour if there are no direct or immediate dangers associated with the behaviour. Alternatively, they might remove children who are behaving inappropriately from situations that have triggered that behaviour. Educators develop a wide range of behaviour management strategies. They draw children's attention to the consequences of their behaviour.

			They also model appropriate behaviour and provide children with verbal and non-verbal cues to elicit desirable behaviour. Educators focus on observable and measurable aspects of children's behaviour.
Developmental theories	Piaget Donaldson Bowlby	Development depends on contexts and is the result of unique combinations of genetic and environmental circumstances. Developmental milestones are achieved in order for a child to be ready for learning and play. (Development leads learning.) Children learn through their exploration and play with concrete materials. Development is holistic. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains of development are interrelated and interwoven. Developmental theories recognise both consistency and variability in child development. Different theories of child development offer signposts to different ways for understanding	Educators facilitate children's learning by planning a rich environment with routines and play-based experiences appropriate for children's unique and holistic development. Planned experiences may link to learning objectives (goals) in order to assist children achieve developmental expectations and milestones. Educators use observation of children in everyday activities to understand and interpret children's development and individual differences. Observations may take many forms and from these diverse records, educators plan learning environments that support children's learning. Interpretation of observation records is based on knowledge of developmental theory and research in order to draw inferences about children's learning across developmental domains.

		young children.	
Socio-cultural theories	Vygotsky Malaguzzi Rogoff Fleer	Relationships and participation are central to learning. Children develop and learn in multiple ways that are socially and culturally approved and constructed. Children learn ways of being interdependent through their participation in everyday events and as members of different social groups. Children play ahead of their development (Learning leads development.) Children are active agents and contributors in the different social groups in which they participate.	Educators take into account the contexts for children's lives in their expectations, planned experiences, resources and materials and in routines such as meals and sleep arrangements. Scaffolds by other children or adults are provided to support children's learning. Scaffolds (for example questions, prompts, demonstrations) help children move through learning with assistance to learn new shared or independent understandings or skills. Educators use responsive listening in order to understand and respect children's learning. Children's diverse ways of learning and expressing that learning are documented in multiple forms in order to ensure those learnings are visible to others. Learning stories or narrative notes are used to provide context-rich and respectful accounts of children's learning, strengths and interests. Learning experiences connect with and extend children's ways of knowing, skills and understandings which they bring with them from home and community to the early childhood setting.

Critical theories	Freire	Children are born with rights, including the right to be consulted, heard and listened to in matters that affect them. Children have agency, which means they have the capacity to make decisions and choices about their learning. Social transformation is supported through education for a more just and equal world.	Families and children are co-participants with educators in negotiating, developing and implementing learning agendas, outcomes and assessment. Critical questions are used to support planning by exploring learning from the child's perspective: • What is it like for me in this place? • Do you listen to me? • What does a good day look like for me? Different strategies are used to help children discuss their answers to these questions with educators (role play, photographic images, discussion, puppets). Educators adopt a critical enquiry approach to curriculum planning, evaluation and assessment. Pedagogies such as using character dolls intentionally explore or challenge issues of inclusion, fairness or discrimination.
Post-structuralist	Foucault MacNaughton Canella Grieshaber	Children have complex and shifting identities as they move between and participate in different social groups. There are multiple and contested ways of knowing and learning.	Pedagogies include a focus on seeking out how power plays out between children, children and educators and the equity effects of these dynamics in relationships. Children and adults take social action to support democratic participation and inclusion for every child and family. Learning experiences build or bridge the different ways of knowing and learning that children bring with them to early childhood settings. Educators use multiple assessment strategies and sources and different perspectives to interpret this data.

The next table shows how different theories provide different perspectives on children's *belonging*, *being* and *becoming*

Table Z: Theoretical perspectives on belonging, being and becoming

Theoretical perspective and reflective questions	What this theory tells us about belonging	What this theory tells us about being	What this theory tells us about becoming
Behaviourist perspectives *What images of children and learning do behaviourist perspectives convey?* *What are the strengths and limitations of behaviourist perspectives theories for knowing children and supporting their learning?* *In what circumstances and contexts might behaviourist theories be particularly helpful or unhelpful?*	Children's sense of belonging to families, groups and communities is enhanced when they behave in ways that are considered acceptable and desirable.	Children's behaviour is a key aspect of who they are. Children's behaviour, experiences and environments are closely connected. Children develop habits in their behaviours. .	Learning to comply with family, group and community expectations is an important aspect of becoming. Children learn new behaviours through imitation and from others' responses to their behaviours. Children repeat behaviours that get a response (reinforcement) from others. They eventually stop behaviours that are not reinforced.
Developmental perspectives *What theories of development best support planning for children's belonging, being and becoming?* *What theories of attachment can support educators planning for children's sense of belonging?*	Children's early sense of belonging is linked to their experience of secure, loving attachments to family members and other significant adults.	There are uniform and predictable ways of being a child. Children progress through different stages of development. Children have individual and unique pathways for development and learning.	Children's becoming is a gradual unfolding or maturation of developmental capacities which allows them to be active participants and learners. Children's independence is supported through learning experiences which foster their ability for decision making, problem solving, language and thinking skills.

How do developmental perspectives contribute to or limit ways of knowing children and supporting their learning?		Children's learning and development (their being) enable them to participate more actively in families and communities. Children's development is viewed in domains – typically labeled as physical, social, emotional and cognitive.	
Socio-cultural perspectives *How does children's active participation in different communities or groups connect with their belonging, being and becoming?* *How do the personal and community contexts for individual children and groups of children affect the ways they experience belonging, being and becoming?* *What are the strengths and limitations of socio-cultural theories for knowing children and supporting their learning?*	Children belong to different social and cultural groups through their connections with adults and other children from birth. Children actively seek ways to belong from birth. Children's valued contribution supports their sense of belonging.	Children's ways of being in the world are socially and culturally sanctioned or approved. Through participation in everyday experiences children learn about being interdependent with both adults and other children. Children can have multiple and mutual attachments.	Children are both being and becoming. These are interdependent and indivisible constructs. Children's development (being and becoming) is socially and culturally sanctioned.
Critical perspectives *Who is advantaged when particular ways of belonging, being and becoming are privileged?*	Children have a right to belong to and identify with family, culture, country and community.	There are diverse ways of being a child. There are many different childhoods.	Children have the capacity to be active agents in and to make decisions about their becoming.

What are the strengths and limitations of critical theories for knowing children and supporting their learning?	Children's sense of belonging in community or social groups can be compromised by inequalities (for example, those caused by poverty, racism, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion). Belonging is integral to a child's identity.		
Poststructuralist perspectives *Whose ways of belonging, being or becoming are valued? Whose are not? Why?* *What changes in pedagogy could be made in response to the answers to these questions?* *How do poststructuralist theories contribute to or limit ways of knowing children and supporting their learning?*	Children belong to a range of cultures including those of gender, ethnic background and social/economic class. Children can change the ways in which they belong as they participate in different groups. Children's belonging is connected with broader community or societal contexts.	Children have multiple identities that shift and change depending on where they are and who they are interacting with and relating to.	Children experience many kinds of becoming. Becoming is not linear, always predictable or always measurable. Children's becoming is not a fixed, staged progression.

The scenario below illustrates how different theories can provide different insights and the benefits of drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives.

Sabrina and Jandamara work in the toddler room of an inner city long day care centre. They are very aware that children learn a great deal during routine times of the day. They have been observing children's behaviour, skills and social dynamics during lunch times and have documented different things that children do and say. They have looked at their observations from a number of different perspectives and are beginning to see a range of reasons for the many different things that happen during lunch. They discussed the following observation that Jandamara had recorded in their daily journal.

> *When the 2-3 year old group came in for lunch, Hubert noticed that one of the table settings had the knife and fork on the opposite sides so he swapped them around. Fanisha and Fenua then circled the table and checked the placement of the cutlery around the table. Fenua pulled a chair over to sit beside Fanisha.*
>
> *I started to serve up the lunch with Bradley and Micha. They were having an argument about who had the biggest spoon. I kept one ear on the conversation as I continued to pass the plates around. I asked Fenua why he moved a chair beside Fanisha. He said because she was beautiful. Then I saw Fenisha say something to Micha across the room like 'you are a girl'. Micha then said 'you talk funny' and they both ended up in tears. Although they frequently have these kinds of conflicts these children are getting really good at serving lunch by themselves. I don't have to help with the serving spoon as much and don't have to ask them to sit down while they are eating.*

When Sabrina and Jandamara reflected on what this might indicate about children's learning, they identified several possibilities:

From a behaviourist perspective:

- Children are learning to sit at the table by themselves with less intervention from the teachers (*these children are getting really good at serving lunch by themselves*).
- Children are learning not to walk around while they are eating (*don't have to ask them to sit down while they are eating*).

From a developmental perspective:

- Children are learning the skills of holding a serving spoon and bringing food to the plate independently (*I don't have to help with the serving spoon as much*).
- Children are seating themselves at the table independently (*Fenua pulled a chair over to sit beside Fanisha).*

From a socio-cultural perspective:

- Children are choosing to be seated in friendship groups (*Fenua pulled a chair over to sit beside Fanisha*).
- Children are learning from each other during lunch time (*Hubert noticed that one of the table settings had the knife and fork on the opposite sides so he swapped them around. Fanisha and Fenua then circled the table and checked the placement of the cutlery around the table*).

From a critical perspective:

- Children are noticing diversity (*Micha then said 'you talk funny'*).
- Children are making choices about who to sit next to, possibly on the basis of gender (*I asked Fenua about why he moved a chair beside Fanisha. He said because she was beautiful*).

From a poststructuralist perspective:

- Children are using difference as a way to include and exclude (*Then I saw Fenisha say something to Micha across the room like 'you are a girl'. Micha then said 'you talk funny' and they both ended up in tears*).
- Children are in constant tension about how they negotiate power relations that produce ideas, identities, and differences and how they are used to include and exclude.

These insights helped Sabrina and Jandamara to identify many ways they could use lunchtime to extend children's learning. They decided to:

- encourage children's interest in the patterns in how cutlery is set out and draw their attention to patterns on the plates and mugs *(relates to Outcome 5: Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work)*

- invite children to scrape and stack their plates after they finish eating and gradually extend the range of active roles children can undertake as part of lunchtime routines (*relates to Outcome 1: Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency)*

- assist children to make themselves a place tag (digital photograph of themselves pasted on to cardboard) to use at lunchtime to indicate where they are going to sit *(relates to Outcome 4: Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, technologies and natural and processed materials and Outcome 5: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts)*

- engage children in conversations about how they can help all children to feel included in the lunchtime social gathering and a valued member of the group *(relates to Outcome 1: Children learn to interact with others with care, empathy and respect)*

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 8

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND FAMILIES

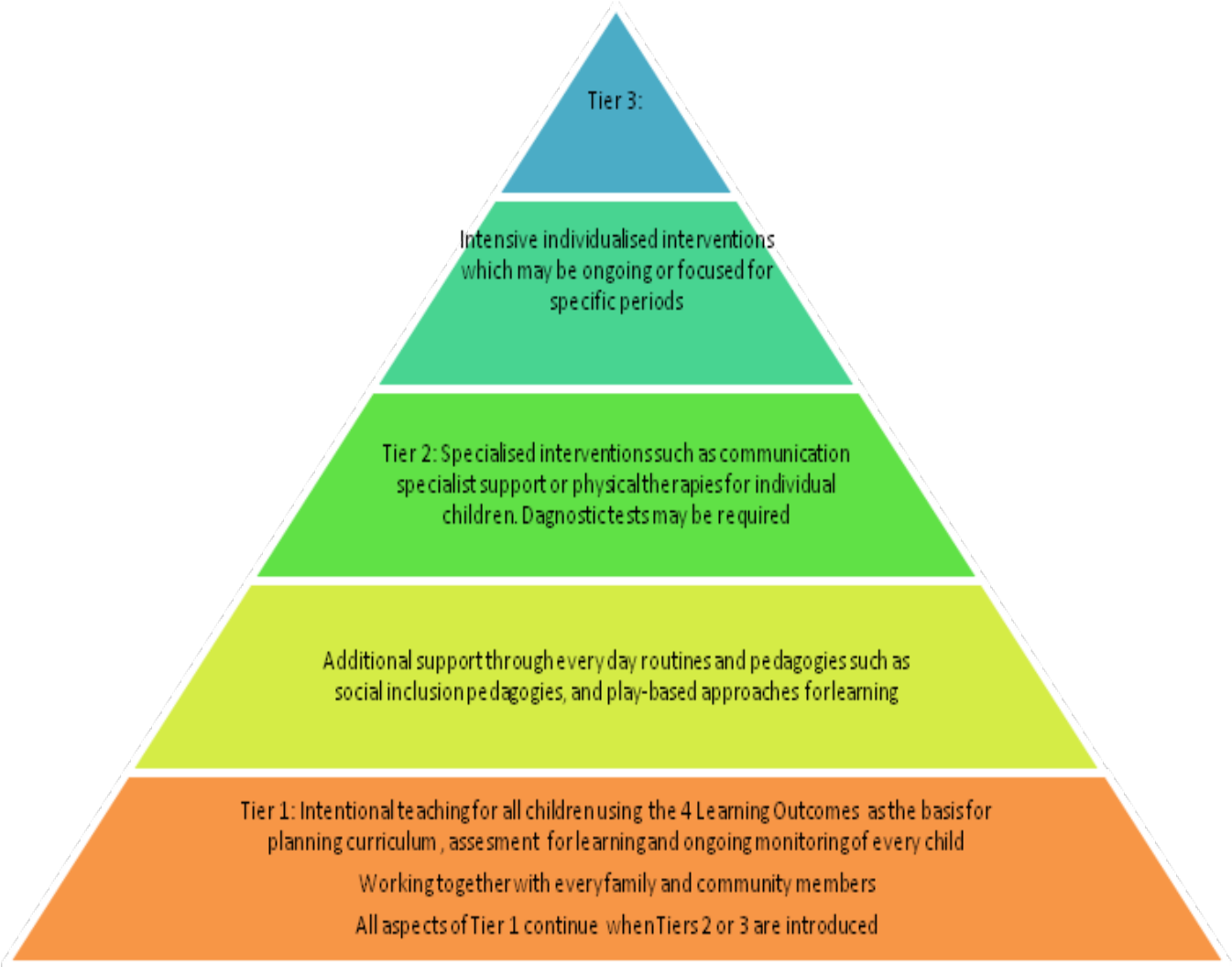
Encouraging all parents and families to be active in assessing children's learning may take time. It will occur in different ways according to the context of the early childhood setting.

Communication strategies might include using:

- email or telephone conversations
- audio or video clips
- photographs
- newsletters
- notice-boards with displays of children's work
- individual children's folders or portfolios
- informal conversations with family members when they visit the setting or when you visit their home or community
- community language workers to ensure dialogue is possible with families whose first language is not English.

Families can add to the documentation and understanding of children's learning by sharing their observations of children as learners in the home or community. They can also share their expectations or suggestions for consolidating or extending children's learning. Sending home short video clips via email or on DVDs or CDs of the different ways children learn and what they are learning and asking parents or extended family members to respond to this documentation can generate new insights into children's learning. Educators can also share some of their documentation tools such as digital, video or disposable cameras or tape recorders with families so that they can record home- and community-based learning experiences. This shows families that you value their contribution to understanding, assessing and planning for children's learning.

Collaborative assessment and monitoring helps educators and families to identify when further diagnostic tests, additional support or targeted interventions are required in order for every child to realise learning outcomes. Educators undertake these evidence-based interventions in parallel with universal pedagogical provisions, as the diagram below indicates.



(Adapted from DECS, SA *Assessment and Evidence in the Early Years Draft* doc and *Recognition and Response Conceptual Framework*, Coleman, M.R; Buysse, V; & Neitzel, J. (2006).

The diagram above illustrates the important principles that underpin collaboration with families:

- Family-child-centred partnerships with educators and other specialists
- Curriculum informed by early childhood early intervention and mainstream curriculum research, theories and practice evidence
- Respectful, inclusive, individualised, flexible, and empowering responses
- All children and families experience acceptance and support.

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources – CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 9
CONTINUITY OF LEARNING AND TRANSITIONS

One of the responsibilities of educators is to support all children to experience continuity of learning through smooth transitions, including the important transition to full-time school. All children have the right to learn skills, gain understandings and develop attitudes that provide a foundation to support them as confident learners when they begin full-time school. When educators base the curriculum on the five learning outcomes and the principles in the Framework, children will have a firm foundation for the many transitions and changes they experience in the early years, including moving into full-time school. Culturally competent educators support transitions by using pedagogies which respect all children as competent learners. The importance of continuity of learning and transitions is one of the key practice principles in the Framework.

Ongoing exchanges of information between early childhood educators, other professionals, children, families and schools and responding to children and families' expressed views, concerns and expectations about beginning full-time school underpin smooth transitions. Responsive planning for smooth transitions might include:

- facilitating dramatic play or use of puppets to enable children to explore individually and with others their understandings of full-time school and transition processes
- using children's literature to initiate discussions with children about becoming a full-time school child
- participating with children and families in transition to full-time school experiences offered by local schools
- arranging for local school teachers to visit your setting so that children can meet them in a familiar place
- documenting a rich account of children's learning, interests and strengths in partnership with children and families to share with teachers in the school. Reports or accounts that use indicators of a child's learning and progress across the five learning outcomes in the EYLF would help to support this exchange
- using ongoing assessment to help identify when additional monitoring, testing or interventions in collaboration with families and other professionals may be required for individual children.

Educators and families often use the term *school readiness* when they are making decisions about whether or not children are ready for full-time school[1]. Over-emphasising structured and narrowly defined 'school readiness' abilities results from a simplistic definition of readiness that places universal expectations on all children, families and contexts. Rather, readiness is a complex matter which is constructed differently for specific contexts or purposes. When schools, communities, early childhood settings, families and other

[1] The term '*full-time school*' is adopted in this section to reflect the fact that some children in Australia attend early childhood settings within individual schools or school systems, which means they make transitions within a school from part-time to full-time attendance.

specialists work collaboratively and respectfully, children will be ready to participate in both new and continuing experiences in full-time school. Readiness applies not only to the child, but also to schools, local communities and families:

Ready schools:

- collaborate with early childhood educators, children, families and others, such as bilingual aides, who work with children to develop flexible processes that facilitate a smooth transition which responds to individual children and families
- adopt a 'whole-school' approach to transition which includes all teaching staff, children, parents and staff from support services such as before- and after-school programs
- use play-based learning, collaborative projects and other pedagogies which support continuity of learning and inclusion for every child. For example, they continue using resources familiar to the child that were used in the early childhood setting, such as picture cards to support a child with autism.
- focus on developing relationships which respect and respond to every child's and family's strengths, expectations and diversity of life experiences by building on or bridging these ways of belonging and being
- build on the learning that children bring with them from home, community and early childhood settings to full-time school.
- aim to get to know children in all their richness and complexity and in all areas of their development (the 'whole child')
- act on the understanding that a child's transition is a family's transition as well, and make every effort to provide a welcoming environment where each family is respected and experiences a sense of belonging
- understand that transitions take place over a period of time, and that the child's settling in is not just about what happens before and at the time of the change, but after as well.

Ready communities:

- ensure that children's safety is considered before the start of the school year by providing, for example, safe pedestrian pathways and car parking spaces near schools or controlled school crossings
- provide locally based community resources for families, such as community health services where children can have health or dental checks or get referrals before beginning full-time school, or community libraries where families can borrow and use resources to support their children's learning.

Ready families:

- feel confident to express their views, questions, expectations and exchange information about their children's transition to full-time school with early childhood and school-based educators
- give positive and encouraging messages to their child about starting full-time school
- understand the ways in which everyday events and practices at home or in the community can provide worthwhile learning experiences for their child
- participate in partnerships with educators where their expertise and wisdom is sought, affirmed and acted upon.

Ready children:

- feel confident and happy about starting full-time school and know adults will listen and respond to their questions and concerns
- understand that they will experience both changes and continuities when they start full-time school and look forward to these
- have many opportunities to become familiar with the full-time school environment; know the full-time school staff as well as the routines that will occur in the first weeks -- for example, before- and after-school arrangements and lunchtime routines
- have opportunities to express their expectations and perceptions of becoming a full-time school child
- know there is respect for their cultural and linguistic diversity and individual differences through experiencing inclusive pedagogies such as support for the maintenance of their home or first language.

All children will benefit from thoughtfully planned transitions to full-time school experiences which respond to their differences, similarities, strengths, interests and skills. Educators working collaboratively with children, families, early intervention specialists and support staff can identify and plan specific ways to support positive transitions for children with additional needs. These could include:

- completing and submitting documentation if funding is required to support the child's inclusion in the full-time school setting
- sharing resources and processes to support the child's meaningful participation in the school setting
- working with bilingual educators so that information, concerns, expectations and preferences can be shared both ways between educators and families.

Planning for positive transitions involves collaboration and networking with other professionals or specialist staff and developing a range of practices and processes that respond to all children, families and local contexts.

Questions for reflection

- How do you ensure that children's and families' feelings, understandings and expectations about beginning full-time school are expressed, discussed, documented, interpreted and acted on?
- How do the diverse constructions and definitions of *school readiness* connect with different theoretical perspectives? What are the strengths and limitations of these different perspectives?
- What evidence have you found that children collectively (with peers) develop shared understandings and ways of preparing themselves for beginning full-time school? How can you acknowledge and facilitate this learning?
- Who evaluates transitions to full-time school? How do they do this? How do these evaluations inform future practices?

Resources and references

Centre for Community Child Health, *Rethinking school readiness* Policy Brief, No 10, 2008.

Available at www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm

Centre for Community Child Health, *Rethinking the transition to school: Linking schools and early years services*. Policy Brief, No 11, 2008. Available at www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm

Docket, S. & Perry, B. (eds) (2001) *Beginning school together: Sharing strengths*. Watson, ACT: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2006) *Starting school: Expectations and experiences*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Useful websites

National Child Care Accreditation Council: www.ncac.gov.au

Raising Children Network: www.raisingchildren.net.au

(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 10

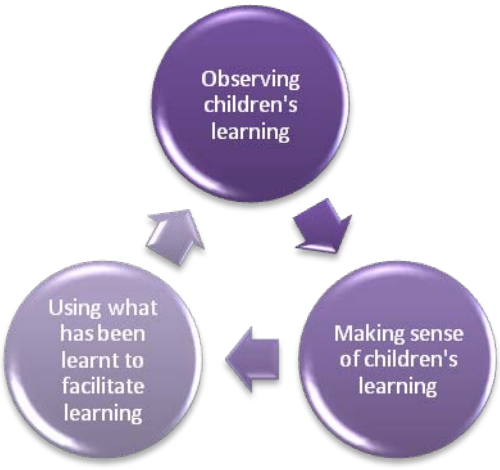
MAKING SENSE OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING

While documentation *makes visible* children's learning to children, parents and families and other educators, it is not, in and of itself, assessment of children's learning. All approaches to assessment require educators, in partnership with children, parents and families and other educators to make sense of, or interpret, the information they have acquired.

In making sense of what they have learned about children's learning, educators draw on their own educational philosophies and a range of theoretical perspectives that explain how children learn and develop. Educators may find that different theoretical perspectives can be useful in providing different insights to children's learning. For example, developmental perspectives can be useful in analysing children's use of fine motor and gross motor skills, while post-structural perspectives can be useful in analysing children's relationships, such as the extent to which particular children are included in or excluded from play. In the Framework, the five learning outcomes and their components also provide educators with reference points for making sense of what they have learned about children's learning.

Including colleagues with different experiences and qualifications as well as families and children brings multiple perspectives to the information that has been gathered and provides new insights into children's learning. Collaborative partnerships encourage children and families to contribute examples of children's experiences and learning at home. These contribute to interpretations and allow for the expression of diverse ideas and lead to the emergence of new insights.

Using what has been learned about children's learning to facilitate ongoing learning



As educators make sense of children's learning, they gain greater insight into children's relationships, interactions, ways of participating, learning styles, responses to diversity, learning processes and dispositions, areas of interest and understanding of concepts.

Educators make good use of assessment information when they use what they have learned to:

- interact with children in learning experiences and activities
- promote sustained shared thinking
- initiate conversations with children
- offer feedback to children that sustains, extends or challenges children's thinking about what they are doing and learning
- model thinking to children
- plan effectively for children's current and future learning
- communicate about children's learning and progress
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing toward realizing learning outcomes, and if not, identify what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular outcomes and provide that support or assist families to access specialist help
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered and the approaches they take to enable children's learning
- reflect on approaches to pedagogy that are responsive to the context of the early childhood setting.

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 11

ASSESSING LEARNING

When educators assess children's learning, their intention is to find out, make sense of what they discover and to use what has been learnt to facilitate ongoing learning. In this way, assessment becomes one part of the day to day process of teaching and learning. It is an integral, rather than separate activity in the curriculum development process (Drummond 2003).

Approaches to assessment

Broadly speaking, there are three main approaches to assessment in early childhood education:

Assessment ***for*** learning extends children's learning by enhancing teaching. It is formative, occurring continuously throughout the learning process rather than at the end. Assessment for learning enhances the teaching process as educators develop a deeper understanding of the children with whom they work. What they have learned in their interactions with children informs plans for ongoing learning. Assessment for learning is enriched when children, parents and families, and all educators in the setting are actively involved in the process.

Assessment ***as*** learning occurs when educators recognise the process of assessment as a powerful tool for learning. Assessment processes used as learning, particularly those involving the documentation of children's learning, enable children to learn about themselves as learners and develop an understanding of how they learn. This occurs as educators and children talk about learning as it occurs, reflect on learning that has happened and plan together for future learning. Using assessment as learning requires the educator to view young children as competent, capable and active learners who are able to lead their own learning.

Assessment ***of*** learning emphasises the summative aspects of assessment and confirms what children know, understand and can do. Typically occurring at the end of a learning experience or at transition points in a child's educational journey, assessment of learning can also assist when educators or families have concerns about children's learning or development. As with all approaches to assessment, the assessment of children's learning is enriched when children, parents and families, educators and other professionals are actively involved in the assessment process.

These approaches to assessment help children, parents and families and educators to know what children understand, know and can do. This knowledge guides educators in their interactions with young children and informs plans for future learning.

'Finding out' about children's learning

All approaches to assessment require educators to observe, or find out about, children's learning. In many instances, this is achieved as educators interact with young children or

The term ***formative*** describes assessment processes that are ongoing and occur throughout the learning process. They contribute to children's learning by enhancing teaching.

The term ***summative*** is used to describe assessment processes that typically occur at the end of a learning experience or activity and 'sum up' what has been learned.

have informal conversations with parents and families. Interactions and conversations with other educators in the setting can also illuminate different aspects of children's learning. Educators also gain insight into children's learning through the use of more formal methods of observation and by documenting children's learning.

Documenting learning

Documenting children's learning involves collecting information and artefacts that detail and describe the diverse ways that children engage as learners in early childhood settings. Rich documentation incorporates multiple perspectives on a learning episode and captures and illustrates the complex nature of children's learning. It foregrounds what is important to children and emphasizes the connected nature of learning (Carr 2001).

Documentation makes children's learning 'visible' to children, parents and families and educators. Used as a learning tool, the documentation of a learning experience can assist children to develop an understanding of themselves as a learner and an awareness of how they learn. In addition, documentation serves as a form of accountability since it provides rich evidence of children's learning in an early childhood setting.

How can educators document children's learning?

A range of methods can be used to document children's learning. Educators make choices about the most appropriate methods depending on what they want to understand about children's learning. The list below describes a range of methods that educators can use to document children's learning in relation to the five learning outcomes in the Framework. Examples of these methods can be found in the sections on each of the outcomes.

Anecdotes are useful for depicting children's participation in individual and shared play experiences and processes of learning such as exploring, problem solving, hypothesising and researching. Anecdotes can also record verbal and non-verbal interactions in play and children's emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency. Anecdotes can also note how children function in their attachment relationships and friendships and record children's physical activity.

Audio recordings can be useful in documenting, sharing and revisiting children's words, conversations, poems and songs.

Checklists and *rating scales* can provide a summary of children's learning in a particular area such as physical development, but do not provide sufficient information to be useful for sharing information with families or for planning to extend learning.

Comments, *narratives or explanations* made by children about their paintings, drawings and constructions and the processes they engaged in can provide insights into their processes of learning.

Diagrams and sketches of children's play made by educators or children can show children's capacity to investigate and manipulate resources and to take on different roles. Diagrams of children's constructions can also make evident the use of shape, size and or colour to create

patterns. Children's plans or diagrams of completed constructions also demonstrate their emerging understandings of space and perspective.

Jottings are brief notes that can include words used in interactions, the context for a photograph or sample, or an explanation of the processes a child or group of children engage in to create a product. These might include details about how children manipulate tools or the types of physical activities they engage in.

Learning stories (Carr, 2001) focus on children's strengths, interests, actions and dispositions and are useful for documenting children's involvement in learning, including communication, interactions and collaboration. Learning stories can be effective for capturing children's dramatic play episodes as well as the different roles and contributions of each of the children. They can also document how children approach challenging tasks, demonstrate persistence and resolve situations of conflict.

Lists of texts that children engage with can indicate their engagement with texts and their interests. When family members and children also contribute to this list, children's interest in a particular topic or in different types of texts such as magazines or computer-based texts can be identified.

Pictorial graphs and charts created by children on paper or screen to indicate features such as the frequency of an event or the growth of something over time can provide insights into children's understandings of numeracy concepts such as measurement.

Photographs of children's play and interactions can capture children's investigations and are particularly useful for documenting very young children's exploration. They can also demonstrate children's curiosity and their interest in and appreciation of the natural environment and children's attempts at a new task or skill. Children can take photographs or their own experiences -- for example, their participation in movement, drama, dance and physical activities, including their physical mobility and dexterity with small tools.

Running records are detailed narratives of children's learning. They often focus on one child's learning and are written as learning is occurring. They are useful to capture details of social interactions and conversations between children. They can also be used to record a child's reading or retelling of a familiar book.

Samples of drawing and painting created with paper and/or on screen and descriptive accounts of the processes children engaged in to create these works demonstrate ways in which children experiment with resources and explore colour, line and patterns. For older children drawings and painting will also indicate how they use visual arts to express ideas and make meaning. A series of samples can also illustrate children's persistence and achievement of mastery over time. Displays of children's work can also enhance children's sense of pride in their finished products.

Samples of writing, including marks, scribble writing, letters, numerals and words, created with paper and/or on screen, demonstrate children's interest in print and emerging

understandings of symbols, letters, words and numerals. Descriptive accounts of the processes children engaged in to create these works provide further insights into their understandings about the processes of writing.

Storylines can document children's dramatic play scripts and illustrate children's understandings of relationships, character and plot.

Texts created by children can provide insights into their use of different media to create meaning. These could be print-based or multimodal texts, such as a book with drawings and text, or music and spoken words created by children on a music player, computer or paper.

Transcripts of conversations between an adult and a child or group of children and among children capture children's language and conversation skills along with their ideas, questions and reflections. These transcripts can also depict children's contributions to play and their responses to diversity, awareness of and respect for others' perspectives and understandings of fairness and social justice. Children's conversations can also provide evidence of children's capacity to cooperate and negotiate and to share in group decisions.

Video recordings of children's explorations, physical play, movement, dance, dramatic play and performances can capture many aspects of children's learning, such as their use of their bodies, spatial awareness, exploration of different roles and identities and use of creative arts to express meaning. Videos can also record children's levels of confidence and willingness to share aspects of their culture and home life with others.

Webs of children's thoughts about a particular topic can capture children's ideas and questions as well as their capacity to make connections and generalise. When webs are completed at different stages during children's investigations and projects they can provide insights into the growing complexity of children's understandings and the language they use to talk about these ideas. The addition of photographs and children's drawings can assist in capturing the ideas of younger children as well as those children with emerging language skills.

Word lists are useful to document the words used by infants and toddlers, children with language delays and children learning English as a second language. These are most effective when compiled in collaboration with family members and when there are examples of words used in context.

Tools such as *notepads, sticky notes, audio recorders (for example, cassette tapes and MP3s), cameras* and *DVD* or *video recorders* make it possible to record children's ideas, actions and language. These tools also enable educators to make the most effective use of time and resources to collect meaningful data about individuals and groups of children and to capture the richness of children's interactions and relationships and the co-construction of knowledge.

When and where is it best to document learning?

Children's learning can be documented by families and children at home and in their local communities and by educators and children at the early childhood setting. Documentation

reflects children's learning most effectively when children are actively involved in learning experiences, interacting with others and participating in everyday experiences. Where possible, children can be included in the collection of data and in reflections on their own learning. This may mean talking with them about the processes of documentation, enabling them to take photographs, inviting them to make choices about the information that has been collected and asking them about the learning processes they engaged in.

What are the ethical considerations associated with documenting children's learning?

It is essential that educators are respectful of the rights of children and families when documenting children's learning. This includes respecting the agency and privacy of children and families, including their right not to participate and not to have documentation made public. Ethical documentation includes having informed consent from families and children and treating documentation confidentially.

Ethical documentation also means respecting children's cultural and linguistic competencies. It is essential that educators take children's proficiencies in their home language/s and dialects into account and avoid making judgments about children's language and cognitive proficiencies based only on their use of the Standard Australian English.

(For references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 12

OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY

Children are born connected to family, community, culture and place. Belonging is integral to human existence and relationships are integral to belonging. Relationships are the foundations for the construction of personal and social identities – 'who I am', 'how I belong' and 'who I can influence'. They are also fundamental to a child's capacity for learning.

Children construct their personal and social identities within the context of relationships and in response to the actions and responses of others. Identities are not fixed but adapt and change according to children's experiences. When children have positive experiences in new places and in new relationships, they come to see themselves as people who are recognised and respected as unique individuals. Children's increasing awareness of gender, ethnicity, nationality and culture, and the contributions they make to the lives of others demonstrates their ongoing construction of identity. Through participation in family, kinship systems and communities, children learn the values, beliefs and practices that connect them to 'their people' or family group and enable them to contribute to their communities.

Learning occurs in the context of secure relationships with family, educators and other children. When children feel safe, secure and supported they grow in confidence to explore and learn. Through secure early attachments and their developing sense of agency and group identity, children develop self-confidence, autonomy, persistence and resilience. When relationships are nurturing, responsive and predictable, children learn to manage their emotions and understand the perspectives and needs of others.

Actions, reactions and responses from significant adults and other children contribute to children's sense of self and their construction of identity. In response to these encounters, children form views, attitudes and dispositions that contribute to their sense of identity.

In their daily experiences children:

- receive messages about what they are good at and what are they are not
- learn about the reactions that others have to their personalities and behaviours
- realise the impact that they have on others
- develop ideas about their ability to negotiate situations
- feel a sense of achievement and pride in their accomplishments
- may develop negative feelings about identity or feel excluded.

1a: Children feel safe, secure and supported

Feeling safe, secure and supported contributes to children's wellbeing and identity. Each child experiences relationships and connections to family, friends and communities which contribute to identity and feelings of security. Children build on those first attachments to

develop further relationships with educators and other children. Feeling safe and secure may look different for each child and is influenced by each family's cultural values and beliefs about raising children. These differences point to the importance of educators building open honest relationships with each family in order to understand different attachment contexts and support each child's relationships in culturally appropriate ways.

Children have many ways of communicating their needs and desires for comfort and support. They learn through their experiences and earliest relationships the most effective ways to connect emotionally with adults. Within these relationships they learn what to expect of themselves and form expectations about adults' availability and responsiveness. Discussions with families help educators to understand more fully children's emotional states and unique ways of seeking comfort and support. When educators make themselves available emotionally to children, they model effective ways for children to express their relationship needs and seek out emotional support.

In the absence of fear and in the presence of trusted adults, children feel sufficiently safe, secure and supported to take reasonable risks and explore their environment and in doing so gain a sense of who they are.

The active role of the educator in supporting children's feeling of safety and security

When relationships are viewed as fundamental to their pedagogies, educators give significant time and attention to building trusting and secure relationships with each child. They are mindful of the importance of initiating relationships and of ensuring that each child participates in learning in ways that build self-confidence and connections with educators and other children. Educators recognise the value of spending time each day with each child individually as well as within small groups. They recognise and understand children's growing social competence and use appropriate strategies to enable children to learn together.

To facilitate children's feelings of safety and security and to support their learning educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- acknowledge and respond sensitively to each baby's cues for physical and emotional comfort
- encourage two-way sharing of information with families about their child, particularly at arrival and departure time
- ensure as far as possible that familiar educators are available for each child and family at arrival and departure time and for sleeping, toileting and feeding routines
- make sure they have ready access to their favourite toys and comfort items

- have many one-to-one exchanges and conversations. These could include lap games, sharing songs and rhymes, going outside to look at things of interest, talking about what is happening, look through windows to show a different perspective as well as playing together and interacting during routines.
- comfort and support distressed, anxious or angry children in ways that respond to their physical and emotional cues
- watch and listen carefully for all attempts to communicate, respond and take opportunities to extend and respond to children's communication attempts
- initiate verbal and non-verbal conversations with babies and support their growing awareness of the patterns of a conversation, the turn-taking involved and the body language that is used. The aim is to let babies take the lead in these conversations, so that they will want to do it again because it is so enjoyable.
- be responsive to the natural rhythms of children by having a flexible but predictable routine that accommodates children's individual sleep patterns and activity levels and enables them to become familiar with and have some control over their day.

For all children:

In relation to families:

- welcome children and families each day, encouraging them to share stories and events since last meeting. Sharing stories helps children make sense of their own experiences and learn how to tell their own stories.
- take the initiative to build trusting relationships with families and actively share information about each child. This happens when educators take time to talk with families and learn about their values, cultures and aspirations for their children.

In relation to children:

- ensure that children settle in with a familiar educator or other children on arrival
- acknowledge and value the personal relationships children form with trusted adults
- provide personal items and mementoes in the environment that reflect children's identities and lives – for example, photographs of children and families, comfortable places to sit with family members, familiar toys and comfort objects, cultural artefacts and symbol systems
- show interest in children's ideas and play through engaging in extended exchanges or conversations to develop ideas and promote sustained shared thinking
- acknowledge and respond to children's various ways of expressing feelings – for example, sharing in their delight and assisting when necessary to help them find constructive ways of dealing with anger and upset

- make extra efforts in respectful ways with families who do not communicate freely or those who challenge educators' ideas
- make time to be unhurried and allow children to lead experiences and respond to children rather than organising or leading all of their experiences
- organise staff rosters to ensure as far as possible that familiar educators are available to children
- listen and observe carefully to better understand children's individual dispositions, cues and ways of communicating their needs
- find opportunities through day-to-day encounters and routines to build confidence and self esteem in children
- respond sensitively to children's cues for physical and emotional closeness.

1b: Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency

A strong sense of self is the foundation for learning about contributing to broader social groups. Some of the important attitudes and behaviours that are learned during childhood include:

- how to join in a play experience
- when to contribute as a leader and when to stand back and let others take the lead
- judging whether you can do a task yourself and knowing when to get help from others
- responding to disappointment or injustice
- learning how to move on despite a setback
- learning how to be self-directed, motivated and persistent in learning situations
- how to cooperate, demonstrate caring, and resolve conflict with peers.

Autonomy refers to children's growing understanding of themselves as separate individuals, distinct from those with whom they have attachments. It includes understanding themselves as active and contributing members of groups and appreciating the influence that they have on others around them. Autonomy is understood differently among cultural groups and therefore there is no one or right way to be autonomous.

Interdependence refers to children appreciating their growing knowledge and skills and those of others and being willing to contribute and take responsibility within a broader social group. In other words, interdependence is about children having a growing sense of their place in a community and the contribution they can make to groups to which they belong. It involves learning about the many different roles in friendships and groups, how everyone's skills and talents can enrich experiences. Early childhood is a time to test out and experiment with

autonomy and interdependence. Educators provide children with opportunities to take control, act alone and work alongside others to accomplish something together.

Different value systems place varying importance on autonomy for young children with many cultures valuing interdependence more highly. Appreciating and respecting cultural and family contexts in relation to autonomy and interdependence and working with families respectfully is crucial.

Resilience is necessary as children encounter difficult situations and challenges to their expectations. Children become increasingly aware of others' needs and that their needs may not always take priority. For example, at times they will have to wait or watch another child enjoy a toy that they would like to play with. Children who have experienced secure relationships are more likely to be able to see their own needs in the context of others'. Educators can reassure them that their turn will come. Educators help strengthen children's resilience when they act as advocates for children in the face of unfairness. Isolation and teasing can harm a child's sense of identity and self worth. Children need assistance from educators at times to confront unfair situations and resolve conflicts in ways that are fair and respectful. Reassurance that an adult is looking out for children and supporting them to negotiate sometimes difficult social terrain builds their confidence in themselves and those around them. Resilience develops through the ups and downs of ordinary everyday events.

Agency is children's understanding that they have capacities to influence others and make decisions or choices, particularly in relation to their learning. Even very young children have preferences, make choices and influence others. Children demonstrate the effectiveness of their agency when they insist, persist, resist and challenge. Educators can enhance children's sense of agency when they are alert to these behaviours as expressions of children learning about themselves and the impact they have on the world. Instead of seeing these actions as problematic or disruptive, educators recognise the potential of these occasions to explore with children how their sense of agency and influence can be used to contribute to the community or group in a positive way.

The role of the educator in supporting children's emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency

Educators support children's learning about autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency when they approach their work with a deep knowledge of each child and the cultural context in relation to autonomy and interdependence. They understand each child's strengths and vulnerabilities and find ways to build their capacities as contributing and capable citizens.

In promoting autonomy, educators negotiate with children responsibilities appropriate for their development, culture, abilities, emotional capacities and contexts. They do this in collaboration with families and communities. These negotiations can be complex; therefore they require educators to be thoughtful and reflective as they balance children's needs and desires for autonomy against their needs at times for assistance. Giving opportunities to choose and decide, allowing for mistakes, and sharing the learning from mistakes are important for young children as they learn to negotiate these desires and needs.

To facilitate children's feelings of autonomy, interdependence and resilience and to support their sense of agency educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- create spaces to explore the environment with a known and trusted adult nearby
- allow unhurried time for children to undertake independent tasks and allow for mistakes and accidents that lead to learning
- scaffold children's emerging desires for independence and autonomy by providing support where appropriate and at other times stepping back to allow the child to take the lead

For all children:

- talk with families about their aspirations for their children and how they feel about their child's sense of autonomy and interdependence, and use what is learned to plan for each child
- provide opportunities for children to have some control over the environment -- for example, by making materials for play accessible and teaching them how to use everyday tools such as remote controls, cameras, phones or various forms of cutlery
- support older children to take increasing responsibility for more complex tasks, for example, taking care of their own possessions, dressing, eating
- respect routines that children have decided are important for their wellbeing – for example, saying goodbye to a parent in a particular way, having a story before sleep, using a particular cup
- provide spaces where children can feel a sense of control over routines, for example having a window that allows children to see a parent's arrival, lounges for quiet moments with families, binoculars to see visitors or approaching parents
- provide opportunities for children to contribute their perspectives to documentation of their learning and choose what aspects of their experiences they would like to share with others
- encourage and scaffold children's attempts and support their persistence through helping, coaching and revisiting experiences
- support children to choose to say 'no' to something that is dangerous, unfair or that may cause harm to others
- offer many opportunities for children to repeat and revisit experiences in order to build skill and mastery
- provide facilities where children can store their personal items and treasures
- provide opportunities for children to make real choices, for example, to choose toys that they most enjoy, choose from a range of foods at snack or lunch, make

decisions about friends they wish to play with (perhaps from another room or group), have a say about educators they would like to settle with when they arrive.

1c: Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities

Recognition of identity is fundamental to building confidence as a learner. Children bring understandings of themselves that come from current and prior experiences and the cultural and spiritual context of their families and communities. Finding things that are familiar is reassuring for young children. Being able to see one's identity reflected in photographs, characters in storybooks, home corner props, music and furnishings and having access to personal treasures is affirming and demonstrates that their identity is worthy, acknowledged and honoured. Authentic opportunities to speak a home language and to see it represented within the setting acknowledge language as an important aspect of identity formation.

Early childhood settings provide the potential for children to encounter some of the richness of Australia's diversity. Children can move beyond their experience of family and immediate community and encounter people who hold different values and beliefs and who look or behave in unfamiliar ways. Within the safety and security of their relationships with educators, children have opportunities to observe, ask questions and learn more about difference. The participation of children with disabilities, varying physical appearances such as skin colour, children from privileged backgrounds, monolingual or multilingual or from various family structures such as gay and lesbian, is to some extent an important experience of unfamiliarity. So this is, an opportunity to see difference as a kind of continuum along which all people are placed (Zimbler and Biffin).

Children begin to understand their own situation as part of this continuum, as well as to form attitudes and views about how to challenge discrimination and bias.

Children bring their individual interests, expertise and questions, sometimes referred to as 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez et al., 2005) that can be used as the inspiration for educators when thinking about learning opportunities. These funds of knowledge are integral to children's identities. They provide opportunities for children to contribute to and guide their own learning and inform the learning of others. Children's experiences can be the inspiration to encourage them to find out more about each other and explore other identities. Through role play, puppetry, dance and drama children can experiment with taking on an unfamiliar identity and rehearsing other possibilities. They can feel some aspects of another's life and broaden their experiences beyond that of the familiar.

The role of the educator in promoting children's knowledgeable and confident self identities

In acknowledging and supporting children to develop confident identities, educators begin with a focus on learning about each child, the family, community context and the funds of knowledge that they bring. They seek opportunities to be inspired by children's lives and experiences and to use them as a basis for planning for children's further learning. They are open and honest with children and encourage them to ask questions and learn from each

other about diversity and difference, while always showing respect and affirming the perspectives of all children and the contributions they make.

Educators can support children to investigate their own interests and explore their 'burning' questions through sustained shared thinking and communication. They can provide the resources and facilities for children to experience confidence and a sense of control over their learning and see how their knowledge is built on and enhance the learning of others.

To facilitate this learning educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- make available photos of family, home and pets to affirm children's lives in the setting
- take time to find out about the routines that are important in their home experience and reflect these where possible in the early childhood setting
- learn songs, rhymes and games that are significant and familiar and share these often throughout the day
- learn key words from children's first language to use in everyday routines and greetings.

For all children:

- find out about each child, his or her family and community contexts and individual preferences and interests to the extent that the family feels comfortable sharing this information
- reflect children's identities in the art, stories, materials for play, tools, music and furnishings so that children can feel a sense of ownership
- talk openly with children about diversity and difference, respond sensitively to children's hard questions and encourage children to challenge bias and discrimination
- promote critical thinking and exploration of many perspectives, confront unfairness and encourage children to share their views
- take an interest in and assist children to investigate aspects of diversity and difference
- take interest in and affirm the cultural backgrounds of all children
- investigate and explore aspects of diversity that are not represented at the setting to further extend children's knowledge of and familiarity with diversity and difference
- listen carefully to children's stories and recounting of events and how they see themselves and others in these stories and find opportunities to build on these experiences with children
- undertake research with children and families in order to be better informed about the cultural and community contexts of the children's lives
- talk with families about ways to support home language at the setting, where possible provide resources that reflect these languages and learn some key words in the child's home language

- think carefully about how children's work is displayed and acknowledged and how this might contribute to building children's confidence and feelings of achievement.

1d: Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Early childhood settings provide children with opportunities to extend their experience of relationships with others. Children watch the behaviour of others closely; they learn to be caring, empathetic and respectful from experiencing these ways of being.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's learning to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

To support children's learning to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provide opportunities to develop close relationships with significant adults and develop confidence in their relationships with other trusted adults, older children and peers
- teach different ways to join other children in play, for example by modeling actions supported with words: 'You and I can sit near Leo, and we can use some blocks from the box just like Leo is doing.'
- model care, empathy and respect in play, for example by showing nurturing and care with dolls, handing precious things carefully and talking with children about their feelings when excited, hurt, upset

For all children:

- model care, empathy, respect and responsive listening in communicating and interacting with children, families and colleagues, which makes visible to children different ways of being a respectful member of a social group or community
- use culturally based ways of showing, respect, care and empathy which are relevant to your community, for example, by using correct titles for elders or grandparents
- recognise and affirm children's efforts to show care, empathy and respect by actions such as smiling, verbally expressing your appreciation or writing a message of thanks
- with older children, jointly develop some simple processes for working with others in groups, for example, being clear about each person's role, listening when someone is speaking and dividing up tasks
- have respectful conversations with individual children or family members which show your interest in and knowledge of children and families, such as knowing when a family member is away from home or when a child has been to visit grandparents

- take deliberate action when children show a lack of respect, care or empathy for others. Actions could include:
    - asking questions to prompt children's thinking about their actions and how these might affect others
    - identifying alternative perspectives and solutions to conflicts
    - using picture story books to raise children's awareness of actions they can take to resolve conflicts
    - using families' insights and suggestions about helping children to learn to show respect, care and empathy.

Assessment for learning

Educators use a range of methods to document and assess children's progress and achievement in relation to this outcome in order to capture accurately aspects of children's lives that can be difficult to measure or show evidence of. Educators rely on key teaching skills of observation and analysis along with good record keeping to document children's involvement in and progress toward achieving the outcome.

Many of the observations will also rely on professional judgment and a sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives of learning in order to reflect how the child is progressing within the scope of the outcome. Cultural and family variation in interpretations of concepts such as autonomy, interdependence and wellbeing requires educators to take into account expectations of families in analysing children's progress and achievements.

Evidence of learning in this outcome

Much of the learning within this outcome is subtle and will rely on storytelling, observations of the educator along with discussions with families, children and other staff. Educators might look for children's learning in the following areas:

- children's preferences for educators and friends
- how children respond to and manage conflict situations
- how they demonstrate care, empathy and respect in their play and other interactions
- how they self-regulate their emotions and feelings
- persistence and achievement of mastery of skills and knowledge over time
- children's work when they demonstrate a sense of pride in the finished product
- children's dramatic play episodes capturing the roles and contributions of each of the children
- children's levels of confidence and willingness to share aspects of their culture and home life with others

- children's use of their home language showing their understandings and thinking that may not be evident in an observation of their spoken English.

Talk About

1. Two-year-old Daniel has just enrolled in a family day care setting. During orientation visits with his mother he is confident and happy to play with other children. His mother suspects that he will be become unsettled once he realises she is going to leave him there without her.

What steps could the educator take to make this experience a positive one that will build a strong secure attachment relationship between her, Daniel and his family?

2. Kara is four years old and has just started to attend sessional kindergarten. The educator observes her swearing at other children in the playground as she attempts to enter play with a group of peers. The other children at first ignore her but later a few children begin to swear back at her and call her names.

What will the educators need to consider in this situation to build Kara's confidence and skill in engaging with her peers while being respectful of her family and cultural identity?

1. A group of four- and five-year-old children has been listening to the story of the three little pigs. During the discussion which followed the story reading, Rani, who was born in Africa, says, "My grandma has a house made of sticks, will a wolf blow it down?" Tim replies with, "Wolves are always bad like in Little Red Riding Hood." Carolee added her comment, "People don't have stick houses!" Mitch agrees by saying, "Yeah, we have brick ones."

- If you were the educator, how might you respond to the children's comments?
- What do the children's comments reveal about their understandings of empathy and respect for other ways of living?
- Which theoretical perspectives provide helpful insights to support further intentional teaching to extend children's learning from this initial conversation?

2. It is the start of a new preschool year and the new group of four-year-old children seems rowdier than usual. They demonstrate limited care for the resources, environment and each other. Not wanting to be overly authoritarian, you would like the children to look after their environment and take some responsibility for caring for the resources. You can also see opportunities for children to be more respectful and caring toward each other. What might be some of the approaches taken to increase children's care, empathy and respect while showing equal respect for their backgrounds and prior experiences?

Try out

Examine how your current practice supports children's strong sense of identity (Outcome1)

1. In thinking about Outcome 1 how do you currently build relationships with families and children? What might you do to strengthen these relationships with each family?

2. How do the routines and timing of daily experiences in your setting contribute to or hinder opportunities for genuine and sustained conversations with individuals and small groups? What small changes might make a difference?

Hear about

Example of supporting a child's growing confidence and autonomy in a new environment:

Nikki is 18 months and making the transition from the babies room to the toddler room. Her journey to settling into toddlers has been one of many challenges. In the babies room, she had established a strong rapport with her carers. Moving to toddlers presented her with the challenge of coming to terms with many new faces. As Nikki only attends two days per week, the first few weeks were quite difficult for her and from the time of her arrival in the morning she would experience a lot of distress.

By chance we discovered that when the children went outside Nikki was very settled when sitting in a stroller. Staff would use this time as a way of further building a relationship with Nikki as they pushed her around the yard, talking to her and enjoying one to one time.

Over time Nikki began to settle much quicker in the mornings knowing she could ask for the stroller. Once she was sitting in it she appeared happy to be in any part of the room, observing and sometimes even participating in playful interaction with other children or staff.

Documentation from Nikki's portfolio

7 February Nikki is playing at a tree house experience. She was sitting in the stroller, holding her toys, watching intently as a few other children played there first. Once most of the children had left, Nikki said "I want to play that one." So, I wheeled her over and while still sitting, she began to play.

Eventually she stood up and away from the stroller so she could reach higher. I noticed that one of her toys fell from her grip but Nikki didn't seem to notice as she was so engaged in her play. This was quite momentous and even when different groups of children played at the tree house, Nikki seemed unfazed.

Gradually she didn't always ask for the stroller but still preferred the security of staying close to one of her teachers.

14 February Though still holding onto her toys, she has taken herself to the sofa, picking up a book on the way. Nikki begins to look through the pages, talking aloud and making up a story based on the pictures. Another child sits in the now vacant stroller. Nikki looks at them but quickly returns her attention to the book, not at all bothered that someone else has occupied 'her' stroller.

21 February When Nikki arrives she does cry a little when farewelling her mother. It takes very little time for her to settle. Not only that, Nikki happily joins the larger group that has gathered to put on their hats and go outside. While in the yard Nikki walks over to the seesaw and sits on it, smiling and singing out loud. She appears so at ease and carefree.

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(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 13

OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD

From birth, children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. These might include families, local communities, early childhood settings or global communities. Having a positive sense of identity and experiencing respectful, responsive relationships (see Outcome 1) strengthens children's interest and skills in being and becoming active participants in their communities. As children move into early childhood settings they broaden their experiences as participants in different relationships and communities. Learning to be a participant with others in communities involves children:

- building on their own social experiences to explore other ways of being
- participating in reciprocal (mutual give and take) relationships
- gradually learning to 'read' the behaviours of others and respond appropriately
- understanding different ways of contributing
- learning about their place in relation to others
- appreciating and caring for natural and constructed environments.

Respecting diversity in communities is a complex ethical and professional responsibility for educators. The preamble to Early Childhood Australia's *Code of Ethics* (2006) affirms educators' 'ethical responsibility to take action in the face of injustice or when unethical practice occurs.' Speaking up when an adult or child speaks disrespectfully of or to others and being prepared to explore these issues in more depth with older children are examples of taking ethical action. To act ethically, educators think about their own values, beliefs and attitudes related to diversity and difference and acknowledge and address any bias they hold. Addressing bias is part of becoming a culturally competent educator.

Over time the variety and complexity of ways in which children connect and participate with others increases. Babies participate through smiling, imitating, and making sounds to show their interest in relating to or participating with others. Toddlers participate and connect with peers through such gestures as offering their teddy to a distressed child or welcoming a new child enthusiastically. Older children show interest in how others regard them and understandings about friendships. They develop understandings that their actions or responses affect how others feel or experience belonging.

When educators create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, over time, children learn to act in similar ways. Children learn to live interdependently with others when they participate with others in everyday routines, events and experiences and have opportunities to contribute to decisions.

2a: Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation

Early childhood settings are communities. Living together in early childhood settings provides opportunities for learning about reciprocal rights and responsibilities. Children begin to learn how to actively contribute to life in communities through

- participating in community events with families and educators
- enjoying community resources, such as swimming pools or libraries
- learning about community members who support community wellbeing or safety.
- caring for the environment, for example, by recycling rubbish.

Digital technologies such as the internet enable older children, with the support of their families and educators, to participate in global communities. (See Outcome 5 for learning experiences to facilitate children being and becoming critical and ethical users of digital technologies).

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's sense of belonging to groups and understandings of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for community participation

Educators play an important role in fostering children's learning about how to live productively and positively with others. Very young children's sense of belonging develops through their experience of respectful, responsive relationships and affirmation as valued members of the group. They observe and begin to imitate adults' inclusive actions and words. Educators use words such as 'fair' and 'unfair' to help children understand the impact of their actions. Children gradually learn that they have the right to be treated fairly as well as the responsibility to treat others the same way (reciprocity). Educators assist older children to develop skills in responding to disagreements or conflicts between peers.

To support belonging and participation educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- respond positively to expressed interest in other children by naming the child and affirming their belonging: 'Yes, you know Kai and he likes the blocks too'
- promote making choices and decisions, for example through food preferences or favourite stories: 'I can see that you would like the banana!' when children point or smile to indicate their choice
- provide opportunities for participating in care practices such as holding a sock when being dressed or holding a spoon while being fed by adult.

For all children:

- use children's names in songs, photo albums, conversations, greetings, or stories to support awareness of who belongs to the group

- give children choices and allow them to experience the consequences of those choices within frameworks of respect. For example, educators can invite older children to help re-arrange the space in a setting, which affirms children's capacity for decision making
- provide opportunities for children and families to participate in making**,** following and revising rules or routines, such as deciding with families and older children how and when to offer snacks
- build meaningful community connections to support children's learning about civic participation. Connections could include inviting community helpers, leaders, or elders to visit the setting; making links with people and events that reflect the diversity of the community; and providing opportunities for children to learn about the wider community.

To support learning to participate fairly educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- reassure children when they are upset by another child's actions
- plan the physical environment to promote small, safe places for playing with another child or with an adult
- observe play and interactions closely and intervene before frustration is evident because of, for example, not enough toys or long waiting times.

For all children:

- facilitate children's learning of constructive ways to resolve disagreement or conflict:
  - listen carefully to allow older children to express different points of view before
  - exploring alternative solutions with them
  - model using words to express strong feelings
  - ask questions to prompt children's thinking about their actions and how these might affect others
  - use resources such as picture story books to raise children's awareness of actions they can take to resolve conflicts
- promote equality of opportunity within the setting and explore and address the impact of inequality. For example, if the environment makes it difficult for a child with additional needs to have full access to all areas, work actively with the family, the child and colleagues to make changes for improving access.

2b: Children respond to diversity with respect

Early childhood settings are communities where children experience many forms of diversity in the people they encounter. These might include:

- cultural and linguistic diversity
- gender
- lifestyle
- socio-economic status
- family composition
- physical, social, creative and intellectual abilities
- values and beliefs.

Even very young children become aware of differences and similarities and educators build on this awareness to facilitate learning about diversity of interests, strengths, feelings and ways of being and belonging.

Developing an awareness of the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is important learning for all children growing up in Australia. Culturally competent educators can support this learning by:

- learning culturally appropriate ways of integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources, artifacts, traditions and practices into the curriculum
- engaging in genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives
- paying respect to the traditional owners of the land when meeting with families for formal occasions at the setting or in the local community
- working with families and children to plan annual community-based events to celebrate National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week or Children's Day organised by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
- understanding the stages of first and second language acquisition and supporting families to maintain children's home language/s.

To enable children to respond with respect to diversity, educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- use the words *similar, same* and *different* in everyday conversations and experiences such as sharing a picture or concept book
- recognise that negative responses to difference may simply reflect their emerging awareness of differences and reassure them with actions and words
- embed diversity into care practices by using families' culturally valued ways for routines such as sleeping, carrying or feeding.

For all children:

- model positive responses to diversity and difference in interactions with children, families and colleagues
- extend children's understandings beyond their family to the broader community by using books, films, pictures, and inviting family or community members to share their cultural knowledges and ways of being
- challenge any negative responses by older children to difference or diversity by listening carefully and discussing different and respectful perspectives with them
- provide an environment where diversity and difference are evident every day, including in play materials, food and the way it is served, signage, environmental print, books, outdoor environments, music, posters and art and ways of communicating with children such as signing with hearing impaired children
- use culturally appropriate ways of showing respect, for example, by using correct titles for elders or grandparents.

2c: Children become aware of fairness

Children begin learning about fairness through experiencing it in relationships and interactions with educators and other children. They can begin learning about bias through discussing comments or actions that may result in children feeling excluded and disrespected, such as a child saying 'Boys can't be dancers' to a boy who wants to join in with children who are dancing. Educators assist children to gradually learn how to consider the perspectives of others, act fairly and to recognise and respond to unfairness.

The active role of the educator in enabling and extending children's learning about fairness and taking action in response to unfairness

As children learn to trust and feel secure in their attachments with educators and other children, their relationships deepen and friendships form. Friendships help children to learn about themselves and their own identity as well as bringing pleasure and new social understandings. Being or becoming a friend involves learning how to play fairly and inclusively with others. Becoming aware of one's own and then others' feelings is part of learning how to play fairly with others. For children learning English as a second language, playful learning with friends may provide a 'safe' context for practising this new language.

To enable and extend children's learning about fairness, bias and taking action educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- use words to support their beginning to learn about fairness and inclusion. For example, you can say 'I know you would like to stay on the swing for longer, but Nina wants to have a turn too. She has been waiting for a long time' as you gently help the child off the swing.
- use words to identify feelings when interacting with children: 'Look, this baby looks sad because he can't find his mother', as you share a book with a toddler.

For all children:

- model words of inclusion and fairness and encourage children to use this language. For example, use inclusive language such as, 'Do you want to help us making this house?' 'Is it fair that the girls can't play with you in the block area?' 'What would be a fair way to solve this problem?'
- challenge children when they show bias or discrimination, for example through name calling or expressing stereotyped attitudes ('He's a sissy'); asking them why they expressed these sentiments, how the other child might feel, and what they might say or do differently with support to show respect for others
- use resources such as puppets or picture books to facilitate children's developing awareness of being inclusive and fair when playing with others or to explore different ways of being
- encourage older children to discuss different views about what people can or cannot do as a way to help them think about bias which may be associated with these views. Children's play scenarios, picture books or films can be helpful for starting these discussions, as they can challenge bias in perceptions about what girls, boys, mums, dads or older people, for example, can do.
- facilitate discussions with older children about the ways in which dominating others is unfair and how they can be empowered to take action with adult support.

2d: Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

Learning to respect the environment connects with children's growing awareness that their actions influence or impact on places and resources as well as people. It is empowering for older children to understand that they can be part of local, national and global efforts towards sustainability and conservation of precious natural resources and habitats. Educators facilitate this learning by giving careful consideration to children's environments indoors and outdoors. They show enthusiasm for and commitment to sustainability and conservation as well as appreciation for the beauty and fragility of the natural environment.

To enable and extend children's learning about respect for the environment and taking action for sustainable futures educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- use words to support actions of respect for resources; for example, 'Help me to turn off the tap now so that we don't waste water.'
- point out, name and where appropriate help children to touch or smell natural things when in the outdoor environment

For all children:

- embed sustainability and conservation practices such as recycling art materials, reducing waste and re-using resources into everyday life in the setting
- bring natural materials and items relevant to local contexts for children to appreciate, discuss and examine
- initiate in collaboration with families and children 'green' practices such as growing vegetables or herbs for children's meals

- use picture story books and information books to prompt children's thinking about the connections between living things
- extend children's spontaneous comments or questions about the natural environment by asking questions, making comments and finding information with them to further their understandings.

Assessment for learning

Assessing in everyday social contexts can foster the learning you want for children because it conveys the importance of relationships, interactions and participation. Documenting and assessing in social contexts could include contexts where children are:

- playing with adults, peers or siblings inside, outside or in the community, such as on an excursion to a local park or beach
- working together on projects
- participating with adults in routines such as preparing meals, caring for pets, packing away toys or hanging out the washing
- contributing to discussions or informal conversations
- negotiating how to manage conflict or differences with each other.

Talk about

1. You've become concerned recently because you've started to hear quite a few of the three to five year old children in your group making comments like these:

I won't listen to you; you talk funny.

You're a baby in that wheelchair.

You're a yucky colour!

You can't have two mummies'

You've talked briefly with the parents of some of these children. Quite a few parents have been defensive. Others have said things like, 'They are only little children. They don't mean it. They're too young to discuss those issues. Primary school is the place for those sorts of conversations'. You feel uncomfortable with these responses, but one parent says, 'I think you need to talk about these comments. I don't know how to do it and it worries me that my child would say something like that'.

- How could you work with families to find a shared position on why it is important to discuss and respond to these types of comments?
- What would you say to families to explain your understanding that the children are capable of discussing these comments and that it would be valuable to take up the opportunity and not to ignore them?

- What resources might be available to support you to challenge and explore these types of comments with children and families?

During a conversation with a group of older children at lunchtime, one of the children talked about going to visit her aunty and uncle's farm recently. She said they couldn't swim in the dam this time because there was no water. The conversation continued with children using the word 'drought' and showing some understandings of these issues.

- Why would you consider building on this interest in conservation and sustainability?
- How could you find out and document what the children already know and what they want to find out about this topic?
- What resources (people and materials) could help you develop learning experiences for the children?
- How could you connect these experiences to practices in your setting and the local community?
- What would be the key learning about water conservation and sustainability you would expect the children to achieve?

Try out

Children are connected with and contribute to their world (Outcome 2) when educators facilitate children's learning as participants in communities. As a result of your reflection, consider some changes in pedagogies which could strengthen these ways of being and belonging:

- How confident are you that all children feel that their contributions to the group are valued? What evidence do you have? What other kinds of evidence could you gather?
- How do you deal with conflict in your setting? To what extent are there contradictions between how adults experience and respond to conflict and how you encourage children to respond?
- How do you support very young children in making choices? How do you encourage older children to reflect on the effects of the choices they make? What could you do better or differently?

To what extent do your connections with the local community reflect diversity within the community? How could you work with children and families to extend these connections?

Hear about

The example that follows highlights social, relational and community learning as well as other types of learning and shows how educators can use documentation and assessment to extend, communicate and revisit learning.

Margaret and her husband Bob work as co-educators in a family day care scheme. They have six children in their home-based setting, ranging from six months to seven years of age. There are four boys and two girls, and two of the children are siblings. Two of the children are at full-time school. During the school holidays, they took the children to a local park with a new adventure playground. At the park, they observed the different ways the children played, who they played with and their interests and skills. They took digital photographs to support their observations. During the play, two of the boys refused to allow another child to come into a small space they had found which they said was their cubby. The older sibling of this child challenged the exclusion and after some negotiation, the boys agreed to let her join them. She did so for a short time before running off to do something else. One of the children discovered some gum nuts on the ground which she started collecting and placing in the basket on the pram to bring back to the house. Another child also became interested in the idea of collecting and together they found different natural items which they brought back to show the other children.

Back home the children talked about the new adventure playground and their experiences. Bob downloaded the photos onto the computer and these images stimulated further thinking and discussion about what happened and what they had learned at the park. Each child was invited to identify what they had enjoyed or learned:

- *Davy said he learned that he had strong muscles because he climbed up the rope ladder which is very hard as it moves all the time.*
- *Mai said she learned that gum trees had nuts that drop off the tree when they are old and that she wanted to look at them with a magnifying glass to see what was inside.*
- *Jaidyn thought that it was good that people had built the adventure playground for all the children who lived in the town.*
- *Pete expressed his concern that "some kids were mean to my sister".*
- *Toula liked the swing best and she said she worked out how to push herself up without help from anyone.*
- *Margaret asked the children if they thought Sui learned anything at the park. Toula laughed and said, 'Nup she's a baby', but Jaidyn said 'She was learning to laugh because she laughed when she was watching us kids play.'*

Bob explained about how the local Council had built the adventure playground. After further conversation, Jaidyn suggested that they could write a letter and send some of the photos to thank the Council. The older children thought that was a good plan.

Margaret picked up on Pete's comments and asked him to share with the children how he had helped his sister to be included in the play. Davy listened to Pete's response and commented, 'Yeah, we didn't want girls in our cubby, but Pete said she was allowed as she is his sister, so we said "Okay you can come in Toula". Margaret asked the children how it feels when someone says 'You can't play with us'. These questions encouraged the children to share their understandings about playing fairly and inclusively. Margaret and Bob noted the different understandings that were revealed in the children's comments. They understood that they could build on or challenge these beliefs with further learning experiences such as using picture story books to stimulate thinking about this issue more deeply.

Later some of the children drew or painted pictures about their experiences in the park. Writing the younger children's exact words about their experiences underneath their pictures validated that they had something

worthwhile to contribute. Jaidyn wrote a thank-you letter to the Council on the computer with help from Davy and Mai. They selected some photographs and drawings to include with the letter.

The collected natural items became a focus for an initial conversation about natural environments, their fragility and beauty and their importance to people and animals. Two of the children were interested in these issues and explored them together for several weeks. They used the digital camera to take images of the items they had collected, as they wanted to make a book about what they had discovered.

Margaret, Bob and the children shared their experiences in the park with the parents when they came to collect the children using the images, stories and pictures. One parent said he thought that the thank-you letter could also be sent to a local service club as they had donated materials, time and labour to the project. Another parent offered to bring in some books she had about Australian trees and vegetation for the children who were keen to learn more about their collection of natural items from the park.

This example suggests that:

- Educators made informed decisions about what data were worth collecting and how to collect it. Not everything that happened at the park was documented. The different documentation strategies that were used were effective because there were two adults and they were appropriate for the context of the park.
- Educators collaboratively analysed and interpreted the documentation or data they collected in order to assess the learning that occurred and to inform future planning for learning. Parents in this example made valuable contributions for further learning opportunities.
- Children demonstrated different types of learning, including learning about participating in relationships, negotiating skills, appreciation for natural environments, community responsibilities, and the value of active physical play.
- Each child learned or enjoyed different things that linked to their particular interests, dispositions and strengths. Davy for example, enjoys active physical play, and the rope ladder extended his skill levels and increased his confidence. Davy's sense of self and identity as expressed through his physical skills was evident.
- There was group and shared learning about community activities and responsibilities and playing fairly. The group has a shared memory of this experience and documented evidence which could be used later to reflect on their learning and their enjoyment.
- The educators could plan further learning to extend and build on these experiences. This could include extending Pete's ability to negotiate inclusive play practices by encouraging him to model these skills with children who find it difficult; supporting Sui to build on her obvious enjoyment of watching the older children play by regularly placing her near where the children are playing so that she can watch them closely and begin to participate in their play through her gestures, smiles and the sounds she makes when she is happy.
- Educators could use the documentation of this experience and the follow-up learning experiences to identify indicators for Learning Outcome 2 that are specific to this setting. These indicators would identify how children are learning to

participate in relationships and communities. For example, Jaidyn's suggestion to write a letter of thanks to the local council is evidence of his sense of belonging to a community and his capacity to be an active member of that community.

- Documenting the children's learning allows it to be communicated to others, including families, which means they can support further learning by contributing new ideas or possibilities.

Educators, children, families and others who work with children can ask: 'What do the data we have collected and analysed tell us about learning by individuals and groups of children in relation to Outcome 2? Answers might include:

- strategies very young children use to attract others to interact with them
- ways of interacting with or relating to others
- awareness of similarities and differences
- contributing or helping practices and skills
- different ways they express responsibility and respect for others and for the environment
- processes used to enter into play with others
- roles assumed in dramatic or other play contexts (for example, leader, creator, collaborator, thinker, negotiator, problem solver, supporter)
- children's sense of identity and agency
- attitudes and responses to difference and diversity
- ability to recognise and respond respectfully to difference and diversity
- awareness of how their actions impact on others and the environment
- awareness of and ways of showing belonging to a group
- progress in developing skills to solve disagreements in constructive ways
- understandings about their local community and how they connect with it
- emerging awareness of global communities and how they connect with them.

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(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 14

OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING

Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, personal hygiene, physical fitness, emotions and social relationships is integral to wellbeing and self confidence. An integrated and holistic approach to learning in early childhood takes account of the importance of these aspects of life and living.

Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between children's physical activity and their brain activity. Hence, opportunities to be physically active are a major factor in early development and essential to children's ongoing learning. Physical activity and attention to gross and fine motor skills as well as movement patterns provide children with the foundations for their growing independence and satisfaction in being able to do things for themselves. These skills enable older children to play games with peers, work together to construct objects, use tools, assist others and teach younger or less experienced children.

Healthy lifestyles contribute to children's ability to concentrate, cooperate and learn. Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play. Early childhood settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children.

Enhancing children's understanding of their emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing is an important component of holistic learning. By acknowledging children's identities, their cultural and spiritual worlds and responding sensitively to their emotional states, educators build children's confidence, sense of wellbeing and willingness to engage in learning.

Health and safety are important areas for learning in early childhood. As children become more independent they can take greater responsibility for their health, hygiene and personal care and become mindful of their own and others' safety. Routines and rules such as hand washing, toileting, packing away and walking safely outside the setting provide opportunities for children to learn about health and safety. In these daily experiences children can learn about their responsibilities to themselves and others.

3a. Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing

Wellbeing is the result of children feeling safe, secure, healthy and happy. It underpins and determines children's responses to the environment, people and new experiences. Children demonstrate their wellbeing when they:

- behave in ways that show a feeling of belonging (in their family, in their peer group, in the early childhood setting)
- engage eagerly in learning
- respond with interest to the initiatives or play ideas of other children
- show affection and enjoyment in their relationships with others

Material drafted by Charles Sturt University (CSU) Early Years Learning Framework Consortium, 2009

- exhibit positive dispositions when faced with conflict or challenges
- show a sense of purpose.

Wellbeing gives consideration to the connectedness of mind, body and spirit, and an holistic view of the ways that children learn and grow.

Social wellbeing refers to the ways children relate to adults and other children; form and maintain friendships; are able to empathise with others or 'read' the behaviour of others and respond appropriately.

Emotional wellbeing includes: participating in close, warm and emotionally supportive relationships; being able to express feelings such as joy, sadness, frustration, hurt and fear; responding to others' emotions; drawing on own or other resources when faced with new, challenging or stressful situations.

Spiritual wellbeing means different things to different people. It includes: experiences of wonder, love, compassion, beauty and joy; personal and moral codes of conduct; religious beliefs and practices; and for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples a sacred connection to land and sites of spiritual significance. Spirituality can be seen as an individualized, inner process, or as a group experience of the activities and practices that construct everyday life and culture.

The role of the educator to support children's social and emotional wellbeing

The promotion of child wellbeing is a characteristic of an environment where children have the opportunity to form trusting relationships with adults and other children, and to engage in a rich and varied array of experiences. When educators recognise and encourage children's potential and provide a rich environment, children's daily experiences can be deeply enjoyable and sustaining.

Children, from a very early age, can experience stresses, and the degree to which they are able to manage these stresses has a direct impact on their wellbeing. Educators can help children learn to cope with stress by forming supportive, caring relationships with adults and close friendships with peers. Educators can also ensure children have access to 'down time' when they can rest, calm themselves, or observe rather than actively participate. Regular experiences that encourage children to use their creativity and imagination, as well as opportunities to learn about and practice relaxation and quietness can strengthen children's wellbeing.

Adult support helps children cope with powerful feelings that can threaten their emotional wellbeing, including distress, anger, fear, and frustration at being unable to complete self-chosen tasks. Educators who share a close relationship and have a detailed knowledge about the children are able to provide appropriate guidance and support when children are overwhelmed by strong emotions. This includes helping children to use language as a means to manage strong feelings and to talk about the consequences of their actions.

Sensitive early childhood professionals understand toddlers' needs for choice and decision making opportunities. They understand that a two year old might even say "no" when she means "yes" and are tolerant of toddlers' changes of mind. They provide opportunities for toddlers to cooperate by not demanding compliance with a demand but rather by offering simple alternatives for how the needs of the situation might be met. … If children do not feel that they are autonomous and independent beings, they may display developmentally immature and dependent behaviours and will find it difficult to display initiative later. (Rodd, 1996).

To facilitate children's social and emotional wellbeing educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- celebrate achievements
- provide suggestions and guidance to organize tasks into small, manageable steps
- provide a secure base to support babies' and toddlers' exploration
- provide enough equipment to avoid disputes with peers
- introduce equipment that encourages shared or 'give and take' play, such as balls, wagons
- introduce paired activities to encourage participation with others.

For all children:

- maintain high expectations of each child's capabilities
- challenge and support children to engage in and persevere at tasks and play
- build upon and extend children's ideas
- value children's personal decision making
- give children appropriate responsibility
- provide opportunities for children to make decisions and choices, and to learn from experience, even when this involves errors and mistakes
- collaborate with children to establish rules and guidelines for acceptable behaviour
- mediate and assist children to negotiate with others in times of conflict
- discuss emotions with children and acknowledge their feelings
- encourage children to think about the feelings of others and to see things from their perspective
- talk with children about their emotions and responses to events with a view to supporting their understandings of emotional regulation and self-control

- model strategies for seeking assistance from peers and adults, and prompt children to use these as needed
- provide time and private spaces for relaxation and rest
- encourage children to appreciate the strengths and talents of others
- give shy and quiet children strategies for talking and interacting with others such as asking questions, and sharing information about themselves
- introduce group games to encourage structured participation with others
- collaborate with children to document their achievements and share their successes with their families
- ensure that *all* children experience pride in their attempts and achievements
- invite children and families to share aspects of their culture and spiritual lives as they feel comfortable
- make daily time available for aesthetic and artistic experiences, including art appreciation as well as art making
- include art work, natural and created objects to stimulate wonder and aesthetic appreciation

Discussion starters

1. Gina is a support worker, working with children with additional needs in a preschool. She has been frustrated by the forms she needs to fill in for the funding bodies, which seemed to her to take a deficit approach which was at odds with the preschool philosophy. "We've just had so many battles with working with the original funding forms and evaluation forms, and we kept persevering because we felt that this was the right way to work with children … to look at them in the strength based model, and not looking at children as having deficits".

Gina felt she could use the learning outcomes in the EYLF to really make a difference to children's overall wellbeing. She was able to look at each child more holistically, but still being able to identify the child's challenges and set goals; for example, zipping up his lunch box and using scissors to cut were identified as helping him to develop his emerging autonomy.

Consider how you could set goals for children with additional needs that reflect a strengths-based holistic approach.

2. Maria Montessori believed that educational experiences for young children can be designed to support the 'inner life of the spirit' through a series of everyday moments, events and routines. These daily practices, such as welcoming into a familiar environment, creating order and beauty, appreciating silence and tranquility, caring for others and being hospitable, reveal and support the spiritual dimension of the early childhood setting as "everyday spirituality" (Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007).

This example speaks to the ways that educators can work with children to create harmony in the early childhood setting. Reflect on the dimensions of the physical and social environment that contribute to calmness, beauty and care and how these can support children's wellbeing.

3b: Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

Good health and physical wellbeing are fundamental to a child's capacity to participate effectively in learning. Enjoying active physical experiences, along with good nutrition and preventative health care, contributes to children's feelings of wellbeing and confidence in their abilities.

Early childhood settings offer many opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and habits. The diversity of Australian cultures and the vast geographical differences between communities in which children live mean that children will encounter healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. This will depend on the availability of open spaces, the climatic conditions and the suitability for extended periods of outdoor play, the availability of fresh food and the lifestyle choices of the families and communities in which they live. There is no 'one right way' to be healthy. Educators need to be familiar with local conditions and contexts and take these into account when planning for the health and physical wellbeing of the children.

The diversity of the Australian context can also offer children the opportunity to engage in experiences that might not be familiar to them but are a part of the cultural experience of other children and families. This diversity can expose children to a wide range of activities and events that can spark an interest in a sport, a style of dance, interest in foods or a variety of games. When educators get to know families and provide opportunities for them to share their knowledge and experiences, the scope for healthy living options expands and enriches learning.

As well as a focus on large muscle physical activity, educators give attention to children's small muscle development and their ability to work effectively with a range of tools and media, which can include, for example, pens, pencils, scissors, small safe implements, switches and locks. Incorporating daily experiences that are meaningful and purposeful enables children to use their fine motor dexterity and provides them with practice assisting them to master these skills and enjoy greater autonomy in managing more complex physical tasks.

As children grow they develop greater independence in taking care of their physical health. The level of this autonomy will vary from child to child and will depend on beliefs and values of families. There is no perfect age to master using the toilet nor is there an ideal time for children to eat independently. These skills and many other elements of personal care depend on children's individual temperaments, dispositions and motivations along with the cultural expectations and desires of their families. Families' views, perspectives and expectations relating to personal care are varied. Educators who are sensitive to the variety of approaches and expectations of families can work collaboratively with all concerned to devise successful strategies for children to master their physical and personal care in their own time.

There are also community expectations and 'experts' who can influence thinking about these things. Children will benefit when educators are reflective and thoughtful about how this information relates to their settings, curriculum and the communities in which they work

The role of the educator to support children to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

Beginning with a strong understanding of the local contexts and conditions, educators work in partnership with families to identify ways to make learning about health and physical wellbeing relevant and meaningful. Educators are well placed to model and provide a framework for healthy eating at the early childhood setting. Nutrition policies should take account of research and latest thinking as well as the conditions of the community in which the setting is situated.

Educators recognise the importance of physical activity for children who are able to participate and consult with families and specialists to involve children with disabilities in physical play. Using a range of approaches, educators are able to provide children with physical experiences that fit the context and conditions of the early childhood setting. They focus on building children's skills and confidence to use their bodies and achieve a sense of satisfaction and the 'buzz' that comes from physical work, movement, dance and drama.

Drawing on the experiences and expertise of families, educators can build a repertoire of familiar and new experiences that will engage children in play-based physical activity. These types of activities are generally more relevant and enjoyable for children than commercial programs or activity kits that prescribe ways to 'keep fit'. It is essential that educators view their responsibilities about children's health and physical activity as just as important as other aspects of the curriculum and give equal time to physical play and other forms of learning. Educators who are skilled and knowledgeable about a range of experiences will be able to engage and motivate children to participate.

In working with children to develop growing independence in personal care routines, educators take time to talk with families about their expectations, and develop goals and strategies that fit with those used at home. Educators provide children with the resources and time to practise and master the skills of personal care.

To facilitate this learning educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provide equipment for physical play both indoors and outdoors
- provide a safe yet challenging physical environment that is responsive to rapid changes in development and abilities, for example low platforms to step/crawl up and down, tables and benches that can be used to gain balance while cruising, small indoor/outdoor steps and slides

- give attention to small muscle development and dexterity – nesting toys, posting boxes, dough, sand and pencils / paintbrushes.
- view eating as more than an everyday routine. Present food that is attractive and inviting and talk with children about what they are eating today, their likes and dislikes and enjoy the social aspects of eating with young children
- model health and hygiene practices and talk with children about what is happening during the routines of hand washing, nappy changing, nose blowing and keeping the environment clean and safe.

For all children:

Promote physical activity and play:

- give time, attention and provide easily accessed equipment for physical play in planning for each day
- ensure that all children participate in physical activity that is fun and appropriate to their abilities
- participate in physical activity with children with enthusiasm and delight
- ask families to make suggestions for games and activities that they enjoy with their children
- plan daily experiences in movement, dance and drama that increase children's special body awareness, co-ordination and balance.
- explore the local environment for safe and convenient places to go to run and climb in larger spaces
- provide a range of safe small tools and utensils that encourage fine motor dexterity and enable children to undertake fiddly and complex construction works.

Promote healthy eating and good nutrition:

- involve children and families in the development or review of health and nutrition policies, drawing on local expertise about how to incorporate community and cultural contexts
- provide children with a broad range of foods that encourage them to learn about food choices and possibilities to extend their experiences
- talk with and model healthy eating habits with children
- engage children in informal conversations over lunch or snacks to discuss and reinforce their understanding of good eating habits
- accept children's suggestions for recipes and food favourites that might be incorporated

- encourage cooking and food preparation experiences that reinforce good nutrition and the pleasure of preparing fresh foods
- teach children to appreciate food aesthetically, by taking care with presentation, and by drawing children's attention to textures, colours, smells and tastes
- teach children to read and critique media, including how food and eating is represented, and how advertising works.

Promote hygiene and consideration of safety:

- use visual prompts and supervision when children are learning about personal care routines like hand washing. Ensure that children receive support and guidance until they are competent in taking care of their personal care needs independently.
- involve children in establishing rules and guidelines for keeping the setting healthy and safe, ensuring that they understand the expectations and supporting them to keep to the rules and guidelines
- encourage children to identify and report risks, dangers and unsafe practices in the setting taking increasing responsibility for their own and others safety.

Discussion starters

1. You are about to review your centre's food and nutrition policy. What aspects of the local community and family contexts will be important to consider in this review?

2. What are the range of views and expectations in your setting about children learning to use the toilet? How do these match with your personal and professional beliefs? How are families' views on these and other aspects of children's personal care taken into account?

3. What games and experiences could be introduced to enhance the physical wellbeing of children at your setting?

Staff at an early childhood family support centre decided to promote discussion about healthy eating to the supported playgroup they ran on a weekly basis. Many of the parents were bothered by their children's repeated requests for junk food and refusal to eat a range of fruit and vegetables. It was agreed that playgroup could be a good place to introduce children to more nutritious options where the peer modeling and involvement of adults and children together might provide an environment to promote key messages about nutrition. Staff involved families and children in preparing nutritious foods and encouraging children to help with setting tables and serving the food.

The introduction of healthy eating activities was a success. Parents shared in preparing simple, yet nutritious meals and snacks, such as stewed apple, mashed sweet potato, and fried rice. The food was presented in an inviting, easy-to-eat way. Staff noticed that the children responded well, readily trying and enjoying the new foods. Further proof of success was demonstrated by the healthy snacks parents began to bring along to playgroup and by

listening to parents talk about how they were cooking the meals for their families at home. They also shared thoughts on how to persuade children away from less healthy food options.

1. How can the staff continue to reinforce the healthy eating messages that the families have taken?
2. The success of the healthy eating activity was largely led by the children, who responded well to the nutritious food, and who were willing to try new things. How can this 'child-led' approach be incorporated into other aspects of conveying healthy lifestyle messages to children, and families?

Assessment for learning

Educators might look for children's learning in the following areas:

- seek out and accept new challenges, make new discoveries, and celebrate their own efforts and achievements and those of others
- increasingly co-operate and work collaboratively with others
- recognise the contributions they make to shared projects and experiences
- enjoy moments of solitude
- recognise their individual achievement
- experience individual and group success frequently
- contribute their ideas and experiences in group situations in their home language/s or Standard Australian English
- make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks
- manage change and cope with frustrations and the unexpected
- share their cultural and spiritual experiences freely and confidently with peers and educators
- show an increasing capacity to self-regulate and manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others

References and resources

Bone, J., Cullen, J. & Loveridge, J. (2007). Everyday Spirituality: an aspect of the holistic curriculum in action. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8,* 344-354.

Rodd, J. (1996) *Understanding Young Children's Behaviour*. London: Allen and Unwin

(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 15

OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS

Children learn from the time they are born. When they are confident and involved in learning they are more likely to experiment and explore and to try out new ideas. When children are confident learners they are able to master new tasks and build their understanding of the world around them.

Children are more likely to be confident and involved learners when their family and community experiences and understandings are recognised and included in the early childhood setting. This assists them to make connections and to make sense of new experiences.

Children use processes such as exploration, collaboration and problem solving across all aspects of curriculum. Developing dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and creativity enables children to participate in and gain from learning. Effective learners are also able to transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another and to locate and use resources for learning. Children who are confident and involved learners are increasingly able to direct their own learning.

When children are actively engaged they develop not only positive dispositions but also concepts and the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for lifelong learning. Play-based experiences provide opportunities for children to explore, experiment and interact with other children and educators as they share ideas and negotiate meanings. Play also allows children to revisit and consolidate new learnings.

4a: Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity

Dispositions are defined as 'relatively enduring habits of mind and action' (Katz & Chard, 1989, p. 30). Children develop dispositions for learning when they interact with others and explore and question with encouragement and support. Learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful to children promote positive dispositions.

When children are *curious* they explore environments, manipulate materials, investigate concepts and pose questions. For example, babies explore materials in the sandpit, pour sand into buckets and explore and question the properties of sand as they fill and empty buckets of different sizes. Older children may be curious about resources such as scales, tape measures and magnifying glasses and investigate how they can use these to further explore their environment. Children also explore various art mediums such as paint, music and clay.

When children are *cooperative* they listen to and negotiate with others. Babies take an interest in and respond to others. With adult support and scaffolding, children learn to listen to others' explanations and ideas, solve problems collaboratively, negotiate and work towards shared goals.

Material drafted by Charles Sturt University (CSU) Early Years Learning Framework Consortium, 2009

When children are *confident* they question, respond to others, take risks with their learning, try new ideas and resources and explore through trial and error, problem solving and investigation. They engage in child-initiated inquiry and research, make decisions and share their learning with others.

When children are *creative and imaginative* they play with a variety of materials and use them in innovative ways. Babies explore materials with all their senses and find creative ways to use them. Older children use a range of materials to represent ideas and create their own stories, ideas, characters and scenarios.

When children are *committed and persistent* they persevere with activities, overcome challenges, show determination and apply a variety of strategies to solve problems. Babies and toddlers often show interest in particular objects and engage in repetitive play. Older children pursue their own interests, often in collaboration with peers, remain focused on tasks even when faced with obstacles, solve problems and share ideas with others. They can return to tasks and projects over an extended period of time, and sustain interest and experience the pleasure of persisting to complete complex tasks.

When children are *enthusiastic* they are spontaneous, enjoy a variety of tasks and engage in varied play situations. Children often have particular interests and may be passionate about a particular topic, sport or popular culture character or narrative.

When children are *reflexive* they are aware of themselves and their relationships with others. They reflect on their own learning and are open to new ideas. Older children engage in self-reflection and analysis, for example analysing the impact of their behaviour on others and analysing their own learning.

To support children's dispositions towards learning educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provoke children's curiosity and wonder by providing interesting objects that they can explore safely
- draw children's attention to interesting natural phenomena and model descriptive language in talking with children about how objects look, feel and smell
- show genuine interest in children's investigations and promote dispositions such as curiosity and persistence by describing their actions and processes.

For all children:

- draw on understandings of each child to provide experiences with an appropriate level of challenge
- provide large blocks of time and sufficient space for children to investigate, create, reflect, collaborate, revisit their ideas and co-construct knowledge and investigate different room arrangements and routines that might allow groups of children to work on projects over a number of days.

- display natural objects with magnifying glasses, factual books and internet sites to invite further investigation and clipboards with paper and pens to encourage children to draw and/or write about what they observe
- share photographs, videos and websites depicting the work of a variety of artists and involve children in discussions about their innovative use of materials, ideas and techniques
- record children's creativity, such as their spontaneous singing, listen to the recording with the singer, and talk about musical concepts such as beat and rhythm and provoke further responses with comments such as 'You used a strong rhythm in that song. I wonder how you could repeat that using an instrument?'.
- plan opportunities for children to engage in interest-based investigations and long-term projects where they investigate ideas and where children, educators, families and the local community learn collaboratively
- join in children's investigations, modelling specific language and prompting older children to reflect on and articulate their learning processes and clarify their thinking
- give meaningful feedback that encourages children to listen to the ideas of others, maintain focus, reflect on their own learning strategies and group processes and use the insights gained to further develop effective learning strategies
- model dispositions such as curiosity, enthusiasm for learning and reflexivity by sharing interests and questions with children and discussing and reflecting on their own learning
- support children to persist at tasks by sitting with them and talking about what they are doing, giving positive feedback, reminding them of what they have already achieved and supporting them to think about the next step
- display photographs and samples of children's investigations, constructions and art works and encourage children to talk about and reflect on their actions and experiences.

Discussion starters

1. After investigating some shells with a magnifying glass, Jacob (aged 4) decided that he wanted to draw one. He was dissatisfied with his first attempt and screwed it up and put it in the bin. The educator offered assistance with comments and questions such as 'Let's look closely at the shell – what shape is it? What sort of lines can you see?' and 'Maybe here is a good place to start. Maybe you could make this line that goes around the edge of the shell'. She also suggested to Jacob that he pick up and feel the shell. Together they traced the outline of the shell with their fingers, discussing size and shape, making comments on how the shell was bigger at the bottom and pointy at the top. Jacob remarked that the shell had a spiral, indicating with his finger that it went right up inside the shell. He described the bumps on the shell as sharp and they talked about what sort of lines you could use to make sharp bumps. He then began his second attempt. This second drawing included a great deal

of detail. Later they researched online artists and shells and looked at a number of artworks featuring shells. (adapted from case study of Indigo Preschool (pseudonym) in DEST report Motivation and Engagement of Boys)

> When discussing this example with colleagues, you might like to share experiences of supporting a child's persistence at a task in ways that contributed to their confidence in their own capabilities.

2. Many of the families in the local area work in trades such as plumbing and building, and in hospitality and nursing. Educators have added pieces of plastic pipe, wood, measuring tapes, pulleys, conveyor belts, wheelbarrows and metal spades to the sandpit. What other experiences and resources could they include that would support children to make connections to their family experiences and knowledge?

4b: Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating

Children engage in investigative processes as they take part in everyday life. They explore their environment, ask questions and solve problems. The processes of problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesis development, research and investigation are essential for learning in mathematics and science as well as the creative arts. These learning processes begin from birth.

Babies explore their physical and social environments and manipulate objects. They are interested in how things work and in solving problems. They are curious about smells, taste, sounds, and how things feel. Toddlers are interested in the world around them and frequently ask questions such as 'why' and 'how'. They experiment and solve problems with everyday objects.

Older children increasingly use language as they experiment with cause and effect, ask questions, make predictions, solve problems, hypothesise, reason and reflect on their learning. They observe similarities and differences between objects, people and events and develop skills in classification, counting, conservation of number, length, area, volume, mass, time and sequence.

When children are actively involved in the processes of problem solving they become more confident and involved learners. Problem solving helps children find possibilities and answers to their own questions. These might be questions about how something works or dilemmas they face in their interactions with others. Problem solving involves identifying and assessing a problem, thinking of ideas, gathering data and information to find a solution or answer, trying out and evaluating different strategies and analysing and reflecting on solutions.

Joint problem solving encourages children to view situations from a range of different perspectives, to share ideas and to challenge each other's thinking. Small group investigations focused on problem solving that are supported by educators encourage deep learning and higher level thinking as well as social processes of collaboration and cooperation.

The active role of the educator in supporting children's inquiry processes

When children engage in meaningful play-based investigations their disposition to solve problems and seek solutions deepens. Play provides a supportive environment where children can ask their own questions and generate their own solutions to problems. Educators have a key role in facilitating investigative environments and scaffolding inquiry processes. Well-planned resources and productive interactions can build on children's interests and extend their investigation of big ideas.

To support children's skills and processes in problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provide objects that encourage children to explore, for example objects with different textures, musical instruments and things that can be sorted, pulled apart and stacked
- respond to children's questions by naming objects and providing information about how things work
- encourage children to solve everyday problems such as those involved with eating and dressing

For all children:

- create a climate where children feel confident to explore, seek new challenges, ask questions and take risks in their learning
- provide open-ended resources and collections of interesting materials to provoke children's curiosity and encourage inquiry
- be co-learners with children by posing questions and encouraging them to ask their own questions
- investigate children's interests both at home and in the early childhood setting, document their questions, predictions and hypotheses and support them to engage in in-depth investigations
- assist children to identify problems related to the physical and social environments and brainstorm possible solutions. Support children to identify the problem, think of possible solutions, predict the possible outcomes of these solutions, make a decision about which one to try, try it out and evaluate and reflect on the outcome.
- pose real world problems, for example, How can we find out how a clock works, and use everyday items such as torches and magnets that with the educator's guidance can support children's understandings of scientific concepts

- provide physical and verbal support as children find ways to solve their own problems. Allow time for children to try out their own ideas but intervene when children are showing signs of frustration. Ask children if they would like some ideas or if they need more time to think, suggest that they rethink their goals, break the task down into smaller steps, suggest that they seek help from other children or offer to do the first step to get them started.
- let children know that it is okay to 'make mistakes' and that trying out different ideas is an important part of learning. Accept all ideas, even when you know they will not work and support children to come to eventual solutions.
- support all children to be actively involved in problem solving. This means being aware of who contributes to group discussions, intervening when necessary to ensure that all children's perspectives are heard and teaching children to respect and listen to each other.
- encourage children to make predictions by asking questions, challenging their thinking and inviting them to consider a range of possibilities. Questions such as 'What do you think might happen if…..' promote creativity, imagination and divergent thinking.
- scaffold children's reasoning skills by asking them to elaborate on their thinking and give reasons for their predictions. These types of interactions help children to develop logical thinking and to think deeply.
- provide a range of materials, such as crayons, paints, clay, digital cameras, factual books, posters and computers with appropriate software. These resources, used with educator guidance, enable children to design, construct, plan solutions to problems, research, represent their thinking and share their ideas and solutions with others.
- plan quiet places where children can sit and reflect, plan and generate possible solutions to problems
- model problem-solving strategies by talking about the processes that you engage in when solving problems. Share strategies that didn't work with children and talk about why they didn't work and what else you tried.
- encourage children to think mathematically and scientifically by providing them with resources such as rulers and scales and encouraging them to measure, count, and graph. Join in children's investigations and model mathematical language such as *more than* and *the same as* and scientific language such as *energy*, *air* and *heat*.

Discussion starters

1. How do you provide a challenging environment for babies while also ensuring their health and safety?

2. Some three year olds are interested in spiders and spider webs. Some of their questions are: *Where do spiders live? How do spiders make webs? What do spiders eat? What do spiders drink? What happens if you get bitten by a spider?*

What resources could you provide that would promote inquiry, experimentation, problem-solving and the investigation of big ideas? What family and community resources could you access? How would you support children to represent their learning in ways that are authentic and meaningful? How could children share this learning with others?

4c: Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another

As children's experiences and understandings increase they are often able to draw on previous knowledge and apply it to new contexts. For example, they apply solutions that they used to solve one problem to work through a new problem. The ability to recall events assists children to transfer knowledge from their short-term to their long-term memory and to draw on this knowledge in future experiences.

Children often need time to process what they have learned and make connections between what they know and new contexts. Play provides many opportunities for children to try out and repeat knowledge, practise skills, transfer these to new situations and build on them. Problem-based, hands-on experiences that related to daily living help children to transform their everyday knowledge into academic knowledge.

Children develop metacognition (understandings about processes of learning) as they begin to understand how they use different strategies in their learning. They begin to use words such as *know* and *remember* to explain their learning to others. This is most likely to happen when educators talk about these strategies with children and scaffold children in their use. Educators can also facilitate metacognition by discussing ways of knowing and seeing, providing opportunities for children to use metacognitive strategies and showing children that metacognition is valued.

The active role of the educator in supporting children's capacity to transfer and adapt learning from one context to another

To support children to transfer learning from one context to another educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- talk about what is happening during daily routines and remind them about general patterns of events
- remind them of past experiences and point out similarities between their own experiences and those of characters in books and films
- play games such as peek-a-boo to support babies' capacity to recall and predict..

For all children:

- provide resources that connect to children's family and community experiences and encourage them to transfer learning from home to the setting
- make available a range of resources such as paints, musical instruments and computer software that assist children to reflect on and record their responses to events
- include materials and experiences that encourage children to generalise understandings about attributes such as size and shape from one context to another. For example, block construction, painting, puzzles and clay, combined with intentional teaching, can scaffold children's capacity to transfer their understandings of size and shape to new contexts.
- play memory games and tell stories with repetition, lists and patterns
- talk with children about the characteristics of objects and encourage them to collect, sort, match and classify using different criteria. Provide a range of different resources so that children can generalise their learning.
- reminisce about your own past experiences and encourage children to talk about their experience with their families
- talk with children about shared past experiences, using language like 'Do you remember when….?'.
- draw children's attention to similarities and connections between past and current experiences. When children engage in a task similar to something they have done before, remind them of previous experiences and the strategies they used to reach their goal.
- use photographs and documentation of children's learning to encourage them to talk about and reflect on their learning.

Discussion starters

1. Reflect on and discuss as a team the strategies you use to support children to make connections and transfer learning. Do you find that you tend to use the same experiences, comments and questions? Share strategies and discuss new ideas that you could try.

4d: Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials

Children actively explore their environment and interact with people, objects, technologies, and representations.

Babies resource their own learning by using their senses and all their emerging skills. Older children take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. They make decisions, set goals, reflect and self-evaluate.

Children access a variety of resources including family and community members, books and computer resources. Information and communication technologies enable children to access information and to communicate globally as well as locally.

The role of the educator in supporting children to resource their own learning

To support children to resource their own learning educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- plan learning environments that encourage children to use their senses to explore
- allow time for children to investigate at their own pace
- plan experiences that enable children to follow their own interests.

For all children:

- provide a variety of materials and tools, including information and communication technologies, and large blocks of time that enable children to direct their own learning, follow their own interests and find new interests and questions
- scaffold children to plan, design and resource their own learning by talking with them about the steps in planning and providing them with easy access to a range of resources
- involve children in collaborative planning of projects and experiences and incorporate their suggestions into the program
- provide children with resources such as old computers and bicycles that they can pull apart and investigate their own questions about how things work.
- ask questions such as 'Where could you find that out?' and 'Who could provide us with information about that question?' to encourage children to think about different ways to access information
- invite family and community members to participate in investigations and projects and take children out into the community to visit relevant sites. Local libraries, elders, storytellers, scientists, artists, performers and businesses can all extend children's interests and connect the early childhood setting to the broader community.
- involve children in organising excursions and visits from community members to the early childhood setting. This could involve discussing and recording the questions they would like to ask and planning the best ways to find out about the things they are interested in.

Discussion starters

1. Discuss with colleagues how you currently include children's voices in curriculum planning. Are all children's ideas included? How do you respond when you are not comfortable with children's ideas? How can babies and toddlers have input into the program?

Documenting, assessing and planning to extend learning

Educators, families and children can use a range of documentation methods to identify and communicate children's:

- explorations
- questions
- creative use of resources
- divergent thinking
- problem-solving strategies
- research strategies
- representations of understandings – for example, drawings, writing, constructions
- thinking at the beginning and end of an investigation or project – for example, word lists, webs
- sorting and classifying of different objects
- designs and plans – on paper or computer
- constructions – for example, with clay, boxes, blocks, Lego
- social interactions – for example, collaborative problem solving, strategies used to solve social problems
- reflections on their own learning.

In order to use this information to inform curriculum decisions, educators need to analyse what this documentation tells them about the child's:

- interests
- confidence and enthusiasm for learning
- persistence at a task
- creativity and imagination
- use of books and technologies as a research tool to aid investigations

- capacity to interact with peers, negotiate, develop shared goals and collaborate with peers
- use of predicting, hypothesising, information gathering, evaluation and reasoning when solving problems
- use of language to question, hypothesise, predict and reason
- memory recall
- metacognition
- reflexivity.

Some examples of documentation, analysis and planning

The following example illustrates the ways in which staff built on the curiosity of a group of children.

Context

Kathy, Marisol and Peggy (aged 2) were at the collage table. There were different types of paper available, including crepe paper and cellophane.

Anecdote

Kathy and Peggy picked up the red cellophane and felt it. Then Kathy put a piece of red cellophane over her eyes and walked around the room looking at things through the cellophane. Peggy did the same thing. First they tried red then they tried yellow and green.

Analysis

Peggy and Kathy showed a lot of interest in the different collage materials. They were particularly curious about exploring the properties of the cellophane. They were interested to see how their visual perception of the world changed through the different coloured lenses.

Links to future planning

- Continue to provide a variety of collage materials of different colours and textures.
- Provide children with cardboard tubes and elastic bands so they can make periscopes and binoculars with cellophane. Talk with children about the different colours they can see.
- Explore making different colours with paints.
- Use PowerPoint slides or internet sites and a digital projector to display images and artworks and talk with children about what they can see.
- Make a dark place with boxes or fabric and provide children with torches. Encourage them to explore and talk about light and dark. Add cellophane for children to place over the torches to explore different colours.

- Add materials such as aluminium foil and mirrors for use with torches to explore reflections. Encourage children to ask questions and make predictions. Introduce older children to terms such as *reflection*, *absorption*, *scattering* and *refraction*.
- Make shadow puppets and use them with torches and an overhead projector.
- Explore colours in nature and the environment
- Make a collection of colours.

(Adapted from Mary Bailey House, Santa Sabina College Sydney)

Using reflection to plan for change

The following questions may assist you to reflect critically on the ways in which you acknowledge and extend children as involved learners:

- How do you connect children's experiences in your setting to their home and community experiences? How do you include resources that children are familiar with and that enable them to display their expertise and to adapt their learning to new contexts?
- Do all children have easy access to resources? How do you support children with additional needs to access resources?
- How do you respond to children's interests when they are passionate about things that we are not comfortable with or knowledgeable about, such as Barbie or Action Man? How can all children's interests be incorporated in ways that acknowledge children's interests and extend learning?
- Do all children have opportunities to solve problems and share their ideas? Are there some children who dominate in these types of experiences? Are there any gender imbalances?
- How do you support children to solve problems that are of interest to them and that relate to their questions and dilemmas?

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(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 16

OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

Communication is an essential component of learning to *belong, be* and *become*. From the time they are born children are interested in communicating with others. They use gestures, sounds and language in forming relationships. Understanding language is an important part of communication. Children are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings and to use a range of tools and media to represent and extend their learning.

Children have the right to become competent and continuing users of their home language or dialect as well as to develop competency in Standard Australian English. Maintaining children's home languages is crucial both for their sense of identity and belonging and for their learning.

Literacy and numeracy capabilities are vital for successful learning. Experiences in early childhood settings build on the range of experiences with language, literacy and numeracy that children have within their families and communities.

A broad view of literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, story telling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and, writing. Contemporary texts include computer-based communications and DVDs as well as books. Numeracy broadly includes understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, space and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting. Positive attitudes and competencies in literacy and numeracy are essential for children's successful learning across the curriculum. Experiences in the early years provide the foundations for these competencies.

Technologies are part of everyday life for children. Children have the right to express themselves and explore their world using technologies and to develop confidence in the use of digital media. In an increasingly technological, globalised and consumer-oriented world, the ability to critically analyse texts is a key component of literacy.

Key concepts and processes in language, literacy and numeracy

Children communicate in many ways. These include using gestures, facial expressions, body language, spoken language, drawing, movement, music, writing, media, construction and dramatic play.

While there are some general patterns of development in children's learning, there are also significant variations due to different developmental states and diverse social and cultural contexts. This is particularly the case in the area of communication. Different family and community practices influence children's verbal and non-verbal language, patterns of interaction, preferred modes of communication, experiences with texts and literacy and numeracy strengths and interests.

Some children's speech or understanding of language may be enhanced with the use of symbols, signs, technologies and other communication devices. Children with communication disorders or hearing impairments may communicate effectively with the use

of augmented communication strategies such as cued articulation or sign language, or through the use of high or low tech communication devices.

Literacy is more than reading and writing. It also includes the processes of speaking and listening, viewing and critical literacy. To be literate, children need to be able to understand and communicate using a shared language and symbol system.

Table 1 Key literacy processes

Speaking and listening	• interacting with others • responding verbally and non-verbally • taking part in conversations • using language for a range of purposes: to learn, express feelings, name objects, share information and ideas, give directions and retell events or stories • understanding language used by others
Viewing or visual literacy	• interpreting everyday events, objects, and people • interpreting images, photographs, drawings, artworks, videos, diagrams and multimodal texts • responding to the ways in which aspects such as colour, line, shape, design and symbol systems are used to communicate ideas and create moods, and later being able to analyse them
Creating visual, gestural, spatial and multimodal texts	• creating meaning through drawing pictures, signs, symbols, maps and diagrams • creating still and moving images • using gestures, dance and body movement • composing music • creating three-dimensional constructions using a combination of the above, sometimes with the addition of letters and words, to

	create meaning with multimodal texts
Reading	• making meaning from images, print and multimodal texts. Understanding of language and text structure is crucial to making meaning from print • 'pretend' reading and re-telling stories using story language and drawing on knowledge of how stories work • using understandings of grammar (the way that language is structured) to make predictions about what type of word comes next when reading]
Writing	• making marks • experimenting with letters and words on paper • using technologies • demonstrating increasing understanding of print and the symbol system of sound-letter relationships, letter formation, spelling, grammar and punctuation
Critical thinking/critical literacy	• understanding how texts such as books, films, songs, advertising catalogues and websites are constructed, and how this construction works to present particular points of view [For example, in the case of advertising, texts are constructed in a way that sells products. Stories might be constructed in order to create suspense. Artworks may be constructed to create an illusion] • thinking about and questioning who is included and who is not, and the ways in which particular groups of people are presented – for example, considering stereotyping and gender roles; looking at the meanings and purposes of texts, the views being expressed and how texts work

	• creating texts that are inclusive of diverse cultures and languages and that challenge traditional gender roles

Table 2 Key literacy concepts

Text conventions	• understandings about how texts work and how they are used to exchange meaning. For example, a book is held and read in a particular way and a shopping list usually takes a particular form.
Concepts of print	• understandings of how print works, for example, that print has meaning and that in English print is made up of letters and words and is read from left to right and top to bottom • understandings of punctuation and knowledge of upper and lower case letters
Phonological awareness	• broad understanding of the sounds of a language; begins with learning to discriminate different environmental and vocal sounds and to discriminate between types of sounds
Phonemic awareness	• the ability to recognise the smallest units of sounds in words, such as the three sounds in the word c-a-t • awareness of words that rhyme (words that have the same sound at the end of the word) and alliteration (the same sounds at the beginning of words)
Letter-sound relationships	• understanding that alphabet letters and combinations of letters represent specific speech sounds

Grammatical structures of sentences	• understanding the ways that words are put together to make meaning, for example, understanding the word order for statements and questions. Readers use understandings of grammatical structures to help them to make predictions about the type of word (for example a noun or a verb) that comes next in the text.
Structure of texts	• understanding the ways that texts are put together, for example, understanding that stories will typically contain an introduction, an event or series of events and a conclusion

Table 3: Key numeracy processes

Comparing	• observing and describing similarities and differences between objects • sorting, matching, ordering and classifying objects according to attributes such as size and shape
Problem-solving	• investigation, questioning, trial and error, divergent thinking, decision-making
Predicting and estimating	• thinking about objects and data and making informed deductions and inferences, for example estimating numbers and measurements and predicting which object will be the fastest. Estimating often involves recording ideas in order to compare them with the actual result.
Reasoning	• recognising relationships such as cause and effect • hypothesizing

	• making generalizations • explaining • justifying thinking
Representing mathematical ideas	• communicating mathematical thinking and strategies to others through representations that use pictures, numerals, three-dimensional shapes, on-screen representations or spoken or written language

Table 4: Key numeracy concepts

Number understandings	ability to; • count and order numbers • recognise and write numerals • compare quantities such as 'more than' and 'less than'
Spatial understandings	• awareness of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Children find shapes in their environments and describe them in their own words and later learn names for these shape • knowledge about position (for example, under, over), location (for example, near, far) and orientation (for example, turn, roll)
Patterns	• recognition of repeating designs in the environment • ability to create, copy and extend repeating designs using colours, sounds, shapes, objects, stamps, pictures and actions
Measurement understandings	• concepts such as height, length and mass
Chance and data	• facts, figures and records, such as the measurements taken of the bean plant as it grows, or children's height over time and estimations of the

	probability of events

5a: Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

Babies often use non-verbal language such as gestures, touch, cooing and babbling to take part in interactions and to express their needs and preferences. This is the beginning of speaking and listening.

As young children develop understandings about spoken language they begin to use single words, word combinations and then sentences to name objects, people and experiences and to express ideas and feelings. Older children use language for an extended range of purposes. With experience and adult modeling and feedback, children's vocabulary becomes more extensive and specific and their utterances become more complex.

It is important to remember that many children will be developing their communication competencies firstly in their home language, which may be a language other than English, and later in English. In some communities children will speak their own traditional Aboriginal language, as well as a local dialect, and perhaps a Creole language which contains many English words. They will also need to learn Standard Australian English to ensure their future learning and success.

Not all children develop speech or understand language in the same way. Some children will need extra support to develop their capacity to communicate, while others will benefit from the use of signs, symbols and communication devices to enhance their communication and help make the message clearer.

The active role of the educator in acknowledging and extending children's verbal and non-verbal interactions

To support children's verbal and non-verbal communication educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- be attentive to attempts to communicate both non-verbally and verbally and respond in ways that model and extend language
- initiate interactions and engage them in conversations
- make use of routine times to sing songs, recite rhymes and interact
- talk with them about what is happening around them and look at and talk about photographs and art works depicting familiar objects and people
- plan experiences with children of different ages so that older children can model using language for younger children.

For all children:

- include songs, rhymes, games, books and posters in community languages and English

- share picture books, told stories, rhymes and songs with children in small groups and individually and engage children in conversations about what is happening and how it relates to their own experiences
- share songs, poems, rhymes and story books with children that include numeracy and scientific concepts and talk with children about these concepts to encourage their vocabulary development
- plan small group experiences with open-ended resources such as sand that enable children of different ages and with different language proficiencies to interact with each other using non-verbal communication as well as conversations about shared interests
- join in children's play and engage children in conversations about what they are doing
- engage children in extended conversations throughout the day. Use open questions such as 'Can you tell me about what you are doing….?'; 'Why do you think that happened?' and 'What do you think might happen if…..?' to encourage children to use descriptive, reasoning and predicting language.
- listen to sounds, music and stories and play listening games with children. Talk about the sounds, clap the beat, repeat repetitive refrains and encourage children to retell stories.
- ask questions, use drama and make comments that encourage children to project into the feelings of others, for example 'I wonder how Josie felt when she found the puppy?', and that encourage children to speculate about what might happen.
- provide models of complex sentences and texts, for example, but telling stories about personal experience

5b: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts

Communication involves sharing and making meaning with a range of texts. These include:

- oral texts: conversations, stories, poems, songs, rhymes
- printed texts: notes, books, magazines
- visual texts: photographs, drawings, paintings
- musical texts: songs, performances
- gestural texts: body and facial gestures, dance, movement
- spatial texts: constructions, sculptures
- multimodal texts (that is, texts that integrate different modes, such as images, words and sound): television, DVDs, computer games, internet sites.

Children have many varied experiences with texts. Some children will be familiar with books. Others will have experiences with told stories or songs and rhymes in languages other than English and/or English. Some children will use Braille and be familiar with communication

boards as aids to communication. Many children will engage with texts on television, DVDs and computers and will be interested in texts of popular media culture. Many of the texts that children interact with are visual and multimodal.

Experiences from infancy with a range of texts encourage children to play with the sounds of language and to take an interest in print and how print works. Babies and toddlers are often interested in picture books, told stories, music, television programs and DVDs.

Because texts are so much part of their world, toddlers and older children frequently notice signs, symbols, images and words in their environment, such as the McDonalds sign. Toddlers will often be interested in reading and may 'read' by looking at the pictures and making up the story or using the words they remember if they have heard the story before.

Older children will often have favourite characters and stories that they act out, retell, read along with an adult or read themselves. They use a range of strategies, including using the pictures, their memory, recognition of familiar words and their understandings of text conventions and print to make meaning. As children begin to understand that print has meaning they are able to read familiar words such as their name and begin to understand key literacy concepts such as text conventions and concepts of print and letter-sound relationships.

Children will often engage in reading-like behaviours in their play, for example reading signs and shopping catalogues in a dramatic play area or reading a book to a teddy bear or doll. They will often demonstrate what they know about texts and print in these play episodes, for example holding the book with the title page at the front and running their finger under the print as they read.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's engagement with a range of texts and their capacity to get meaning from these texts

Children engage with a range of texts in their play and everyday lives. They may tell stories, talk on the phone, write a message using scribble writing or invented spelling, look at the print and images on food packaging and measure and weigh objects, for example. These experiences provide many opportunities for intentional teaching. Educators also have a responsibility to initiate literacy and numeracy experiences with children and ensure that all children's capacity to get meaning from texts is supported.

To support children's engagement with a range of texts and their capacity to get meaning from texts educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- display a range of texts such as photographs and posters at children's eye level
- make books with photographs of the children and local places and talk with children about these
- point out and talk about signs, symbols and images in the environment
- share picture books, rhymes and songs in community languages and English and play games using rhyming words to encourage children's awareness of the sounds and patterns of language

- talk with children about what is happening in books and photographs and help them to make connections to their own experiences

For all children:

- provide a range of texts in the environment including books, posters, signs, DVDs and CD-ROMS in relevant community languages as well as English. Include texts created by children as well as commercially produced texts.
- enrich play environments with a range of literacy and numeracy resources and join in children's play to model processes such as reading and counting
- read and re-read familiar, favourite books, particularly books with lots of repetition and rhyme. Encourage children to join in the reading – for example by pausing and encouraging children to say a rhyming word.
- talk about how texts and print works to help children develop understandings of text conventions and concepts of print. Point out the author and illustrator when reading books, for example.
- play games, such as clapping the syllables in children's names and use musical instruments to mark the beats or syllables in words to encourage the development of phonological awareness
- make up rhyming games, such as rhyming words with children's names, and games that involve alliteration, for example 'tidy Thomas'. Talk about concepts such as rhyme and alliteration when sharing books.
- talk about characters, the structural elements of narratives (the ways that stories begin, and the ways that plots develop, for example), features of factual texts such as a table of contents, and interesting or new vocabulary when sharing books and other texts
- discuss how the illustrations in a picture book create particular moods or feelings in the reader or viewer when sharing books with children. Encourage children to create their own images to reflect different moods.
- ask questions such as who is included and who is left out and how boys and girls are portrayed when sharing books and watching DVDs
- read or tell different versions of familiar stories such as the Three Little Pigs and talk about the story from the perspective of different characters, such as the wolf. Encourage children to create new characters or different endings for familiar stories.
- look at advertising texts and talk about how images, design principles, colour and line are used to attract attention and sell products. Encourage children to think carefully about advertising that appeals to them and why it is appealing.

5c: Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

Children express ideas and make meaning in a range of different ways. They draw on the narratives and symbols of their family and community cultures and their own preferred forms of expression to share their ideas with others.

Arts experiences allow children to explore ideas, solve problems and make imaginative interpretations. Through exploration and imaginative expression, children can generate new meanings about their world. Children gain immense pleasure from controlling the marks that they make as well as making sounds and movement. As they develop control over their mark making children can communicate more effectively and intentionally with others.

Art forms like music, visual arts, dance, media and drama open up a world of possibilities for communication. These symbol systems allow us to say things to each other that cannot be said any other way. Arts experiences also provide valuable opportunities for all children to engage in positive social interactions, regardless of their ability to communicate with spoken language or in English.

Children can demonstrate their detailed and complex understandings by using their voices and bodies. Think about a box that has been turned into a plane and launched into the air. This may be accompanied by an improvised song with extraordinarily detailed sound effects that show great knowledge of changes that occur when the plane takes off, cruises, avoids other things in the air and lands, and all of this occurs while using a great range of space to demonstrate the physicality of flying. Later, the 'pilot' provides a visual trace of the flight activity by using a range of implements to draw the flight path and show the changing perspective of the flight as viewed from the ground. These rich data are all communicated to others via the creative arts.

Babies use gestures, facial expressions, body language and movement to make meaning. As they develop greater control of large and small muscles, children begin to have additional ways to express ideas and feelings, such as dance, drama and music as well as drawing, painting and sculpture. They engage in symbolic play and draw on their family and community experience and shared stories to take on different roles in their play.

Babies and toddlers may experiment with different ways of using materials such as crayons, paintbrushes and pencils to make marks. As children begin to understand more about images and print they manipulate materials such as computers, clay, pencils and lined paper, oil pastels and water colours to make meaning.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's capacity to express ideas and make meaning with a range of media

To support children to express ideas and make meaning with a range of media educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- find out about the ways that children express ideas and make meaning at home. Invite families to contribute resources from home or borrow resources that reflect children's home experiences, language/s and resources.

- provide children with easy access to materials such as crayons, paintbrushes and pencils that they can use to experiment with making marks
- respond to children's use of their bodies to express their ideas and feelings.

For all children:

- present children with resources such as puppets, lengths of fabric and dress-up clothes that they can use to take on different roles, create their own scripts and act out familiar stories and experiences
- provide a range of resources such as paints, clay, musical instruments, camera and digital recorders to encourage children to create meaning
- share examples of the works of a range of artists such as painters, sculptors, musicians and dancers from different cultures and talk with children about aspects such as colour, line, beat and rhythm
- demonstrate skills and techniques with resources such as clay, water colours and musical instruments
- respond to children's creations, talking about the meaning they wish to convey and various ways of communicating similar meanings
- add writing materials to children's play areas, such as dramatic play and construction and join in the play to model writing
- involve children in the documentation of their learning by encouraging them to create learning stories with their drawings or photographs and to add their own narratives or captions (which may be dictated or written) to photographs.

5d: Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work

Symbols, signs, images and words are part of children's everyday worlds. Children are often interested in exploring patterns and symbols in their environment and through this they begin to understand that these have meaning. They may be interested in counting objects and may begin to use mathematical language to describe objects in their environment. They also experiment with making marks and writing symbols, letters, numerals and words.

Babies are learning about number when they hear counting rhymes and songs and later begin to be interested in repeating numbers that they know and to say numbers in order, although at this stage they will often miss numbers. Older children will often be able to identify numerals and use number-word sequences to count forwards and backwards. They will also begin to develop one-to-one correspondence and will be able to count objects.

Children learn about space, patterns, measurement, chance and data as they explore their environment. Babies understand space as they crawl and roll and climb into and over objects. They notice patterns in their environment and begin to learn about properties such as size and weight as they manipulate objects and later notice similarities and differences in their environment, which leads to the ability to sort and classify.

Older children refine their understandings of space, patterns, measurements, chance and data as they engage in experiences such as drawing, block building and sand and water play.

They explore patterns with colours, shapes, textures and sounds and can often explain the patterns they have created. They become aware of size as they compare height, weight and strength and begin to understand concepts such as half. They identify objects as 'the same' or 'different', and then with more refined understandings are able to use terms such as 'more than' and 'less than' on the basis of attributes that they can measure. Older children also often use chance and data as they predict, compare and record which toy car goes fastest down the hill or which child is the tallest.

Children notice the images and print in their environment and are curious as to how these are used to exchange meaning. Babies and toddlers may make marks on paper (and other surfaces) with paint and crayons and appreciate stories. As children get older they begin to notice symbols, signs and words and want to know what they mean and want to create these themselves.

Toddlers' writing will often look like a series of marks or scribbles. As children begin to understand more about writing they begin to make approximations of symbols, letters, numerals and words they see around them (for many children these will be in languages other than English) and will use what they know to make strings of letters and patterns. They will often engage in self-initiated repeated writing of letters they know, such as the letters in their name.

Older children will draw on their knowledge of the concepts of print in their reading and writing. They may do scribble writing and sometimes copy print they see in their environment. As they develop understandings of letters and sounds they may write the first letter of a word or the initial and final sound. This results in what is sometimes called phonemic spelling or 'invented spelling'.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's learning about symbols and pattern systems

To support children to understand symbols and pattern systems educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- share counting rhymes and songs and encourage children to join in
- provide pencils, paint and crayons that encourage children to experiment with making marks
- provide spaces and materials that encourage children to explore their body in space.

For all children:

- provide everyday objects that children can manipulate and begin to sort and categorise in different ways. Talk about the similarities and differences between objects and the categories they have used to make their collections.

- include resources for pattern-making such as blocks and wooden beads and talk with children about the patterns they are making and how the pattern works
- talk about patterns and symbols that you see in the environment, in photographs, artworks, and music. Introduce children to specific language to talk about patterns and encourage them to create their own.
- go on walks in the local community and point out symbols and patterns. Take photographs and make drawings of symbols and patterns and talk about these when you return. Older children can also draw diagrams that recreate the path that they took and add in some of the symbols and patterns that they saw. These diagrams can also be used to talk about direction, location and orientation.
- collect and record data such as the changes in children's height over time or the growth of a plant
- provide open-ended resources such as blocks to facilitate children's understandings of measurement, space and number. Join in children's play and model positional language such as 'next to' and measurement language such as 'bigger than' and 'heavier'.
- include magnetic letters and numerals, alphabet and number books and puzzles and matching games with pictures and words, letters and/or numerals
- display posters, signs, labels and alphabet and counting charts in languages other than English as well as English. Talk with children about this print, read it together and talk about letters, words and numerals.
- share a range of texts with children and talk with them about print and how print works. Talk about words, letters and numerals and punctuation marks such as exclamation marks and question marks.
- create texts with children, such as a sign for a block construction or a caption to accompany a drawing
- provide resources that enable children to create their own paper or digital books using drawings, photographs, writing, claymation, children's voices and/or music created by children.

5e: Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

Technologies are part of everyday life for most children in Australia. They see adults and older children using technologies to access information and to communicate with others. Children also use technologies such as mobile phones, music players, televisions, DVD players, cameras and computers at home and in their communities.

For children with additional needs technologies can be an extension of their everyday life or something that provides them with new opportunities. For example, children may use speech output devices or children with sensory impairments may use FM receivers and

hearing aids to help them participate in family, community and early childhood environments.

Children often take on roles of technology users in their play. A baby or toddler might use a block as a mobile phone or use an old keyboard or computer in an office dramatic play setting. They will often be curious about technologies and want to explore equipment such as cameras and computers.

Older children will often be competent users of technologies such as computers, cameras and overhead projectors. They will be able use technologies to investigate and explore ideas as they search for information and will be able to get meaning from a range of visual, print-based and multimodal texts. They will also be able to use technologies to record ideas and data and to create meaning with visual, written and multimodal texts.

Babies will often be happy with toy phones and cameras and old keyboards, as their focus is on exploration. It is important that early childhood settings also provide older children with access to real, working, up-to-date technologies. Still and moving cameras enable children to record and reflect on their own learning and share this with others. Computers are important tools for children to use as they investigate areas of interest and explore their world. Computers also enable children to express their thinking through visual and multimodal texts.

Computers support interactions and collaboration between children and with adults as they share what they are doing or finding, ask questions or provide help for others. Children share ideas and strategies as they play computer games, search for information on the internet, upload photographs or music files and create their own texts.

It is important that educators evaluate the appropriateness of computer software and internet sites. Educators can apply the same selection criteria for appropriate written texts, such as picture story books, when they select appropriate software or other digital media such as internet sites.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's use of information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

It is important that educators are confident in their own use of technologies as well as providing opportunities for children to develop their skills with information and communication technologies.

To support children to use information and communication technologies educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provide access to toy cameras and old phones and computer key boards for them to manipulate and explore

- talk with children about what you are doing when you take photographs and encourage them to be involved in viewing images and manipulating equipment with adult support
- use technologies such as computers and music players to share images, music, songs and stories with children.

For all children:

- integrate computers into children's learning centres and projects so that children can use them to find information, record data, upload photographs they have taken and represent their ideas with drawing, photographs, spoken language, music and writing.
- provide children with still and video cameras to record their own learning as well as using technologies yourself to document learning. Share these images with children and families to facilitate reflections on learning.
- demonstrate specific skills and techniques with technologies, such as how to upload photographs, insert photographs into a document and edit, crop and compose
- engage in collaborative research with children where you use both computers and books to investigate a topic and compare and contrast information from different sources
- plan opportunities for pairs and small groups of children and children and adults to use technologies collaboratively
- use music players to record children's language, songs and music and share these with children and families
- extend children's technology skills and creativity by teaching the use of technologies such as claymation
- evaluate computer software and internet sites before including these in the program.

Assessment for learning

Educators, families and children can use a range of assessment methods to identify and communicate children's learning in the following areas:

- preferred modes of communicating
- interactions with others – verbal and non-verbal
- oral language – for example, conversations, retellings of events and stories, purposes of language (for example, describing, reasoning)
- expressing meaning with visual arts, dance and music – for example, skills and techniques with painting, drawing, three-dimensional constructions, dance, dramatic play
- appreciation of arts and aesthetics – for example, familiarity with artists and artworks, and use of these as references for their own developing artistry

- pattern making and children's descriptions of their patterns
- sorting and classifying of objects
- estimating and predicting
- processes of thinking through a problem and finding and justifying a solution
- interest in symbols and use of symbols to express meaning
- interest in print – for example, interest in books, environmental print
- beginning reading – for example, retelling a story, 'pretend' reading
- beginning writing – for example, making marks, scribble writing, writing letters, numerals and words
- understandings of literacy concepts – for example, text conventions, concepts of print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships
- understandings of numeracy concepts – for example, number, shapes, position, measurement
- understandings of arts elements and concepts – e.g. line, shape, colour, texture, design, balance, pattern, contrast.

Talk about

1. Think about a recent play episode in your centre's sandpit.

   What learning was occurring?

   How were children using language?
   How could you extend children's thinking about mathematical concepts in the examples?
   How could the children record their ideas and creations?

2. You are sharing the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle with children. How would you use this book to talk about mathematical ideas with the children? What language skills could you encourage? What symbols and patterns can you find in the book?

Going deeper

The following questions may assist you to critically reflect on the ways in which you acknowledge and extend children's communication and to plan for ongoing improvements. The questions are grouped under different headings reflecting different themes, but in reality, they are interconnected.

Communication

- What assumptions do we make about the communication skills of:

babies

children with additional needs

children with languages and interaction styles different to our own?

children's understanding of language?

- How do these assumptions influence the choices we make about how to support each child's capacity to communicate verbally and non-verbally? What changes do we need to make?
- How often do we engage in sustained conversations with each child? What can we do to engage in meaningful sustained conversations with children more frequently?

Diversity

- What songs, rhymes, books and stories do we share with children? Whose language/s, culture and life experiences do they reflect?
- How do we incorporate the diversity of children's family and community experiences with literacy and numeracy in ways that value diversity and are not tokenistic? How could we make our program more culturally responsive?
- How do we respond when family expectations for their child's literacy and numeracy learning challenge our own beliefs and practices? How do we negotiate these differences?
- Are the ways that we document and share children's verbal and non-verbal communication inclusive of all families and children? How can we make our documentation processes more inclusive?
- How can we make better use of technologies to collaborate with children and families to document children's learning and to make documentation more accessible?

Technologies

- What is our position on the use of technologies with children? Why? What alternate perspectives are there?
- How do we provide opportunities for children to use technologies to create as well as to play games and research? What else could we do?
- How confident am I in using technologies such as computers, digital cameras, and music players with children?
- How can we encourage collaborative learning with technologies?

Literacy and numeracy

- How do we encourage children who choose not to engage in play experiences involving reading, writing, or numeracy to do so? What other strategies could we

use? How can we scaffold children's understandings of literacy and numeracy without taking over their play?

- What opportunities do children have to engage with a range of numeracy materials and texts – oral, print-based, visual, gestural, spatial and multimodal? How could we extend children's opportunities to express meaning using a range of materials and media?
- What is our position on the use of texts of popular culture with children? Why? What alternate perspectives are there?

Try out

In relation to children being effective communicators (Outcome 5) consider your context in relation to the following.

1. What children's books could you use to talk with children of different ages about spatial understandings associated with position (for example, under, over), location (for example, near, far) and orientation (for example, turn, roll)?

2. Imagine you are the educator. How would you join in children's play and use it as a critical literacy experience in dramatic play?

Hear about

Mario, aged four, has recently begun attending the local preschool two days a week. The preschool staff have observed that he spends much of his time on his own and does not play with the other children. He engages in solitary activities such as painting, drawing and completing puzzles. He does not show any interest in books or writing.

The director spoke to Mario's mother and asked about his experiences at home. The family migrated recently from Chile. Mario lives with his parents, an older brother and sister and his grandparents. The family has a shop and Mario's parents spend very long hours working there or shopping at the markets. Mario is often at the shop as well, or he goes to the markets with his father. Mario speaks Spanish at home, particularly with his grandparents and parents. His older brother and sister speak some Spanish at home but prefer to use English in daily interactions. Mario enjoys watching television and his mother says that this is helping him with his English. One of his favourite programs is Dora the Explorer, which includes some Spanish as well as English. The family home includes newspapers and magazines in Spanish and some children's magazines and colouring-in books and sticker books in English. Mario is particularly interested in magazines that include characters from his favourite television programs.

The director shared this information with staff and they planned strategies to strengthen the continuity between Mario's home environment and that of the preschool and to support him in his interactions with peers. These strategies included asking Mario's family to bring in magazines in Spanish, accessing Spanish music and books from a library, including children's magazines and books about Dora the Explorer, and putting them in the book area, as well as setting up a shop dramatic play area.

What other strategies could staff use to build on Mario's family and community experiences and extend his language and literacy in both Spanish and English?

Think about the children in your setting. How do you acknowledge and build on children's family and community experiences and knowledge?

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(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in 'Linked resources - CSU 2009' folder.)

Document 17
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