HOW TO SERIES

Effective Curriculum Planning and Documentation Methods

In Education and Care Services

PSC National Alliance

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Disclaimer

This resource is based on the most current information available in August 2012.

In developing this resource, we have referred to legislation and regulations, sought advice from professional organisations and reviewed contemporary research. This document should be used as a guide to compliment and develop service's existing practices. Services should always check the currency of information at the time of use and consider the information in this booklet in the context of their particular service.

This booklet can be accessed online at:
www.pscalliance.org.au

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About the ***How To*** series

The ***How To*** series has been created to offer professionals working in the education and care sector in Australia practical support to implement the National Quality Framework. The ***How To*** series consists of seven booklets promoting key areas of quality provision. Throughout each booklet, there are references to national legislation (the Act and Regulations), the National Quality Standard, the Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being and Becoming) and the Framework for School Age Care (My Time, Our Place). The ***How To*** series can be used by a variety of professionals working in education and care services across Australia.

The introduction of the National Quality Framework marks a significant change in the way we, as a community, see children and their place in society. All professionals working in the education and care services are responsible for continuous improvement to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

Whāia te iti kahurangi - Ki te tūohu koe, me he maunga teitei.

'Pursue excellence – should you stumble, let it be to a lofty mountain' (Māori proverb)

Introduction

This resource supports the use of the word 'curriculum' when describing educational program for children in education and care services.

'Curriculum means all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.' (EYLF, p.9)

Your curriculum plan is a way of documenting what you do in your service to support and promote children's learning and development. To ensure that all children reach their full potential in your service, careful thought and consideration needs to go into the experiences offered to them. The EYLF and (or) the FSAC are key components in helping you to plan, implement and review your curriculum for children (as highlighted in NQS QA 1). It is important to reflect on how the learning frameworks (EYLF and FSAC) impact on and influence on your current curriculum decisions. The frameworks not only offer you crucial thinking points in relation to how children learn but also how you as educators can extend this learning and development further through intentional teaching and your everyday practices. A good quality curriculum for young children is based on a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences; however this balance may continually vary.

To develop an effective curriculum for children an on-going cycle of observing, planning, documenting and reviewing the curriculum is essential. Your documentation and assessment of children's learning can be used to inform your curriculum plans. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning. (Hodgman, 2011)

How can this resource help you?

The purpose of this resource is to offer ideas and guidance along with links to the NQF to assist educators in developing their curriculum and documentation practices. This resource also provides links to the NQF in relation to your educational program. Activities after each topic will assist you in thinking about current practices and consider new approaches to creating meaningful curriculum and assessment practices for children with manageable documentation.

Definitions

Curriculum (early childhood) – 'in the early childhood service, curriculum means all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.' (p.9, EYLF)

Curriculum (school age) – 'in the school age care service curriculum includes all the spontaneous and planned experiences for children at the service designed to support wellbeing and facilitate learning. It includes all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events.' (p. 42, FSAC)

Pedagogy – 'educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, program decision-making, teaching and learning.' (p.6, FSAC)

Documentation – the range of methods used by educators to gather information about children, identify and analyse learning, plan and evaluate the program.

Assessment –'the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning.' (p. 17, EYLF)

Principles – the principles reflect 'contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's play, leisure, learning and pedagogy'. (p.10, FSAC, 2011)

Practice – quality practices are based on sound principles. Using a range of rich pedagogical practices enables educators to promote children's learning in meaningful ways.

Abbreviations and Acronyms Used in This Booklet

ACECQA – The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority established under the National Quality Framework www.acecqa.gov.au

Legislation –I n this booklet, the term legislation encompasses the Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) and Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) as applied in each State or Territory through an applied law system. This sounds a little complicated but is explained on the ACECQA website www.acecqa.gov.au

Law / Act – Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010)

Regulations – Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)

NQF – National Quality Framework www.acecqa.gov.au

NQS – National Quality Standard www.acecqa.gov.au

EYLF – Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being and Becoming)

FSAC – Framework for School Age Care (My Time, Our Place)

The Importance of a Curriculum For Young Children

Planning a curriculum for children is important because it:

- ✓ helps to promote children's learning and development.
- ✓ is a means of documenting what you do in your service.
- ✓ encourages educators to think about what they offer to children and why.
- ✓ is a way of sharing children's experiences with families and highlights the role of educators.
- ✓ it offers opportunities for educators to reflect on and develop their own practice.
- ✓ it is a legal requirement (under the NQF).

Features of Good Curriculum Planning and Documentation Include:

- Balancing spontaneity with a sense of purpose and predictability.
- Happy and actively engaged children.
- Consistency of approach from all educators.
- Evidence of children making decisions about their own learning and development. (Element 1.1.6)
- Evidence of learning towards the five core principles of the EYLF and FSAC.
- Family involvement.
- Reflections of the community you are in.
- Meaningful documentation which can be shared with children and families and is used to inform future plans.
- Documentation of children's learning and development is carefully interpreted and analysed; and clearly shows ***how*** children are progressing toward the EYLF and / or FSAC learning outcomes and other developmental areas.

National Quality Framework

Under the NQF there is a legal obligation on education and care services to implement an approved educational program. This is clearly described in the NQS Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice.

The National Law and National Regulations require an Approved Service to provide a program that is:

- based on an approved learning framework delivered in accordance with that framework.
- based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and takes into account the individuality of each child.

The educational program should contribute to the following learning outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.

2. Children are connected with and contribute to his or her world.

3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

4. Children are confident and involved learners.

5. Children are effective communicators.

There are two national approved learning frameworks:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming—The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- My Time, Our Place—Framework for School Age Care in Australia.

(For State and Territory specific approved learning frameworks, please refer to the ACECQA website www.acecqa.gov.au).

Educational Leader

Under the National Regulations there is also a requirement for services to appoint an Educational Leader. This means that an educator, co-ordinator or other person who is suitably qualified and experienced must be appointed to lead the development and implementation of the curriculum (or educational program), in the service.

This person must have an excellent understanding of the EYLF and/or FSAC (or other approved frameworks) to be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection and mentor colleagues in their implementation practices. (See national regulation 118 for specific details).

Although there is a legal duty to appoint an Educational Leader it is important that all educators working with children have the opportunity to be involved in curriculum planning as consistency in practice is an integral part of curriculum implementation. A 'whole team' approach needs to be applied.

Meeting the National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1 states that an approved learning framework (the EYLF and the FSAC) informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development. (Standard 1.1). However other NQS standards also highlight the **importance of understanding each child** (See also QA 5: Relationships with children) and using this information as a basis for planning.

National Quality Standard

QA 1: Educational program and practice

Element 1.1.1 Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.

Element 1.1.2 Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.

Key Things to Consider When Planning and Documenting Your Curriculum

When planning, implementing and reviewing your curriculum there are many considerations, including:

- ✓ Meeting relevant legal requirements that apply to your service (see the NQF National Law, Regulations, National Quality Standard and learning frameworks).
- ✓ Service philosophy and approach.
- ✓ Context of your service – service type and the needs of children, families and community.
- ✓ Educator's understanding of the EYLF and the FSAC.
- ✓ Aim of your curriculum.
- ✓ Teaching practices used to support curriculum.
- ✓ Possible documentation methods.
- ✓ Providing quality resources and materials to support your curriculum / educational program.
- ✓ Organisation of the environment to compliment curriculum plans.
- ✓ Documentation and assessment of children's learning.

All of these factors will have implications for the way in which the curriculum is planned and documented.

Belonging, Being and Becoming (EYLF)

My Time, Our Place (FSAC)

The key elements of the EYLF and FSAC (*Belonging, Being, Becoming, Principles, Practice, Learning Outcomes*) are fundamental to the way in which you develop your curriculum and should be reflected in all aspects of planning, practice and documentation.

The vision of the EYLF and FSAC; **Belonging, Being** and **Becoming** is an essential starting point for reflection. Educators need to consider the meaning of this vision for children, families and themselves when planning and implementing programs.

When thinking of ways to enhance children's learning and development it is important to adopt a holistic approach.

This requires you to think further than simply the traditional developmental domains and recognises the connectedness of children's mind, body and spirit.

When you take a holistic approach in your work with children you pay attention to their physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual ***wellbeing*** *as well as cognitive aspects of learning.* (EYLF, p. 14)

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes are broad statements that identify the 'skills, knowledge or dispositions that educators actively promote in education and care services, in collaboration with children and families.' (EYLF, p.6: FSAC, p.6)

These outcomes can be used by educators to plan opportunities and experiences, and engage in interactions that support children progressing towards and achieving the outcomes. It is essential that the learning outcomes are embedded in practice as this will provide educators with rich and varied opportunities to support documentation of children's learning.

Thinking about my practice

1. Why is it important to plan experiences for children based on their developmental needs **and** the learning outcomes?

2. How do you use everyday interactions with children to promote the five learning outcomes?

3. How do you use children's interests, strengths and culture to promote the learning outcomes?

Brainstorm

Theoretical perspectives

Theories also help you explore different perspectives on *how children learn* and develop, and how you can best support children in your services. Individually, or as a team, you can reflect on the theories (listed below) and consider **how** they influence the way you plan your curriculum and work with children.

Theoretical perspective	Theorists	Key ideas	Practices
Behaviourist	Skinner	Behaviour is learned and can be influenced by the responses children receive to their behaviour.	Positive behaviour is reinforced by rewards.
Developmental	Piaget Donaldson Bowlby	Development is determined by genetic and environmental influences. Development drives learning. Development is holistic and all domains are linked together. Development is both linear and variable.	Planning is based on individual development. Observations are used to identify developmental milestones. Analysis of information is based on developmental theory and milestones. Opportunities and experiences are planned to achieve developmental goals and milestones.

Theoretical perspective	Theorists	Key ideas	Practices
Socio-cultural	Vygotsky Malaguzzi Rogoff Fleer	Relationships and cultural participation are the foundation for learning. Learning drives development. Learning is scaffolded by other adults and peers. Children are active participants and contribute to their own learning.	Planning is informed by children's social and cultural contexts. Opportunities and experiences are connected to children's lives. Educators use intentional teaching and scaffolding to support learning. Children's learning is captured in various forms that make the learning visible in meaningful ways.
Critical	Friere	Children have a right to be heard and consulted. Children have a sense of agency. Social justice and equality can be supported through education.	Programs are co-constructed with children and families. Planning considers learning from the child's perspective. Educators use critical reflection to make curriculum decisions.
Post-structuralist	Foucault MacNaughton Canella Grieshaber	There are many ways of knowing and learning. Children's identities shift when they participate in different social groups.	Planning reflects children's diverse knowledge and experience. Teaching strategies consider power and equity in relationships, and actively promote social inclusion. A range of assessment methods are used, incorporating the analysis of different perspectives.

Adapted from *The Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2010)

It is essential that you draw from a range of perspectives as this can assist you to challenge traditional assumptions and see new ways of working with children and families. The EYLF and the FSAC also asks you to think about your theoretical perspectives when planning a curriculum for children.

Both the EYLF and FSAC are underpinned by many socio-cultural perspectives and play based philosophies (similar to New Zealand's early childhood curriculum Te Whariki), and acknowledge the strong influence of culture in children's learning and development. The frameworks also focus on other features such as relationships, well-being and intentionality of educators, as well as a sense of *belonging, being and becoming* being equally important for every child.

Thinking about my practice

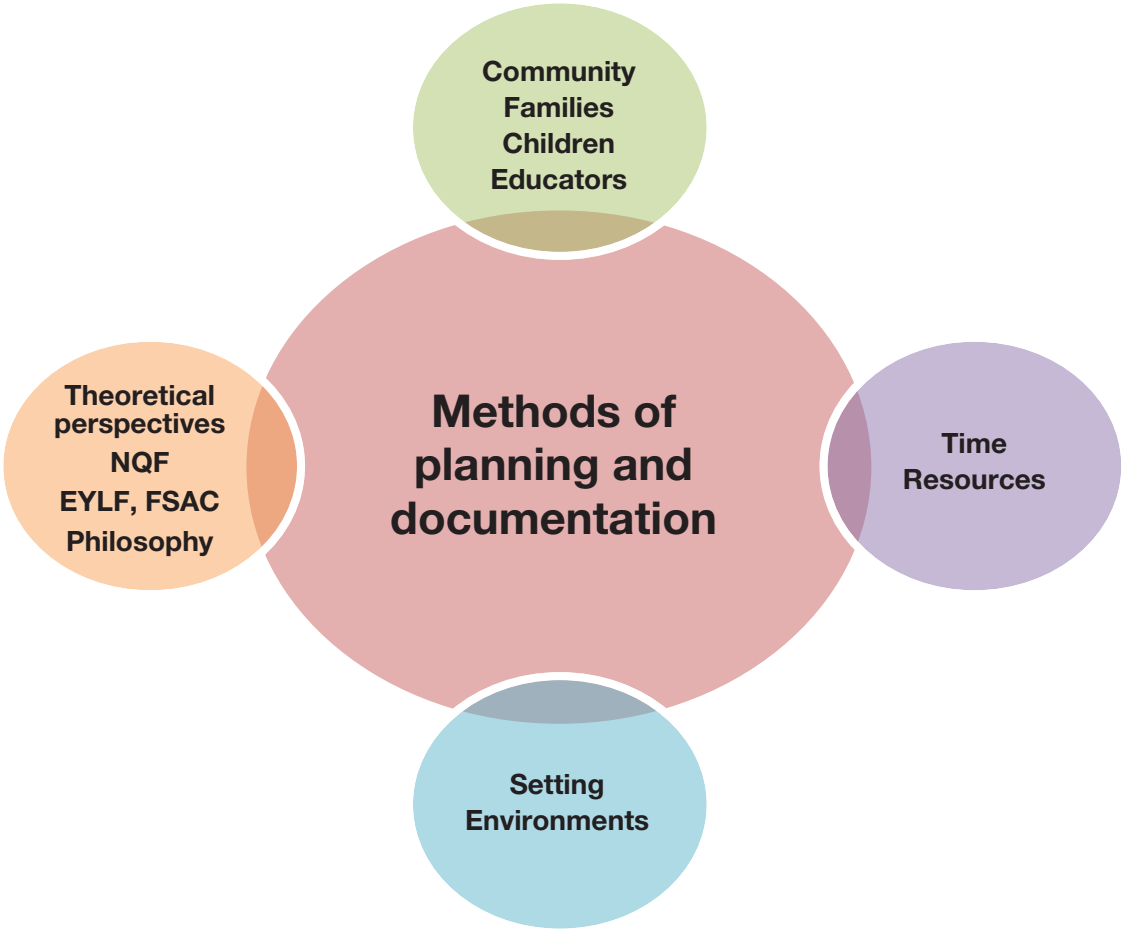
1. Which theories influence your practice when working with children? Why?

2. What theories support the key elements of the EYLF and/or FSAC?

Brainstorm

Getting Started

The methods of planning and documenting your curriculum will be influenced by many factors. Reflecting on some of these factors below will help you to plan a meaningful curriculum in your service, and develop methods of documentation and assessment that effectively engage children and families.



Service Philosophy – The Foundation of Your Curriculum

The purpose of your service's philosophy is to provide a clear statement of the values, principles and practices that underpin the work of *all* educators. It will be informed by theoretical perspectives, research, community values and contexts, and the experiences of individual educators. While it is a requirement of the NQF to have a statement of philosophy or principles, it is **essential that the elements of the statement are reflected in the day to day interactions with children** and curriculum decisions made by all educators in your service. Your professional philosophy and pedagogy should be linked to the service philosophy to ensure practices are consistent and support the underpinning values of the service. It is important that the philosophy integrates the key elements of the EYLF and FSAC, is regularly reviewed and that all stakeholders are consulted during this process. (See the 5 principles of the EYLF and FSAC to assist you in developing your philosophy)

(See the sample philosophy on page 11 of the *How to: Update Policies Successfully (Without the Stress)*

Effective Planning for Children's Play and Learning

Planning is a dynamic and ongoing process that involves working in partnership with children and families. Effective planning begins with the gathering of rich information about children, families, community and contexts. As you make meaning of this information, you can develop your own knowledge and understandings about children. Together with the EYLF and FSAC, this information can assist you to plan a curriculum that supports children's wellbeing and learning. Through active engagement and intentionality you can extend children's play and learning, and discover new insights about children's thinking. These new insights combined with ongoing reflection enable you to evaluate the curriculum and use this information to inform future planning.

Using the Planning Cycle

The NQF requires educators to show evidence of the planning cycle through practice, discussion and documentation. The *Planning Cycle* (see the *Educator's Guide to the EYLF* on pg11) provides a useful structure through which educators and leaders can create their own curriculum.

When planning your curriculum, be responsive (See NQS element 1.2.2) to children's ideas and recognise the need to be flexible and adapt plans accordingly. Although a spontaneous moment cannot be planned, **your responsiveness is critical to supporting children's play and learning.** Following the lead of children requires you to consider ways to extend their ideas. This may occur "in the moment" and also become part of your on-going planning cycle.

The Planning Cycle - In Practice

1. Collect Information

Consider what information is important to collect

- Your context - anything specific to a family, community and children's culture.
- Children's interests, abilities and strengths.
- Your environment - spaces, resources and materials available.
- Children's routines (from home, for example, sleep or meal time).
- Relationships (important people in the child's life).
- Family expectations.
- The names of family member(s) to discuss child's learning and development with.
- Planned outings and excursions (which need to be built into the curriculum timeframe).

Gather information through

- On-going discussions with children, families, educators and other professionals.
- Your own observations (start with what children can already do and are interested in).
- Samples of children's work.
- Audio and video recordings.
- Documentation – enrolment forms or family interviews.

2. Question / Analyse

Consider

- What does the information you have collected tell you about children's strengths, interests and needs?
- What learning is being demonstrated?
- What activities and play opportunities might build on children's interests, strengths and abilities?
- How will children's cultural values be reflected in the service? (Think about how they might develop a sense of 'belonging')
- What resources and materials might extend children's play, learning and development?
- How are families going to be involved in their children's learning and development?
- What communication methods could be used?
- How could the environment better support and extend children's learning and development?
- How are you supporting this play and learning?
- How are you going to listen to children's voices / opinions and use this information to inform the curriculum?
- What learning outcomes could be promoted?
- What intentional teaching strategies would enhance children's learning?

3. Plan

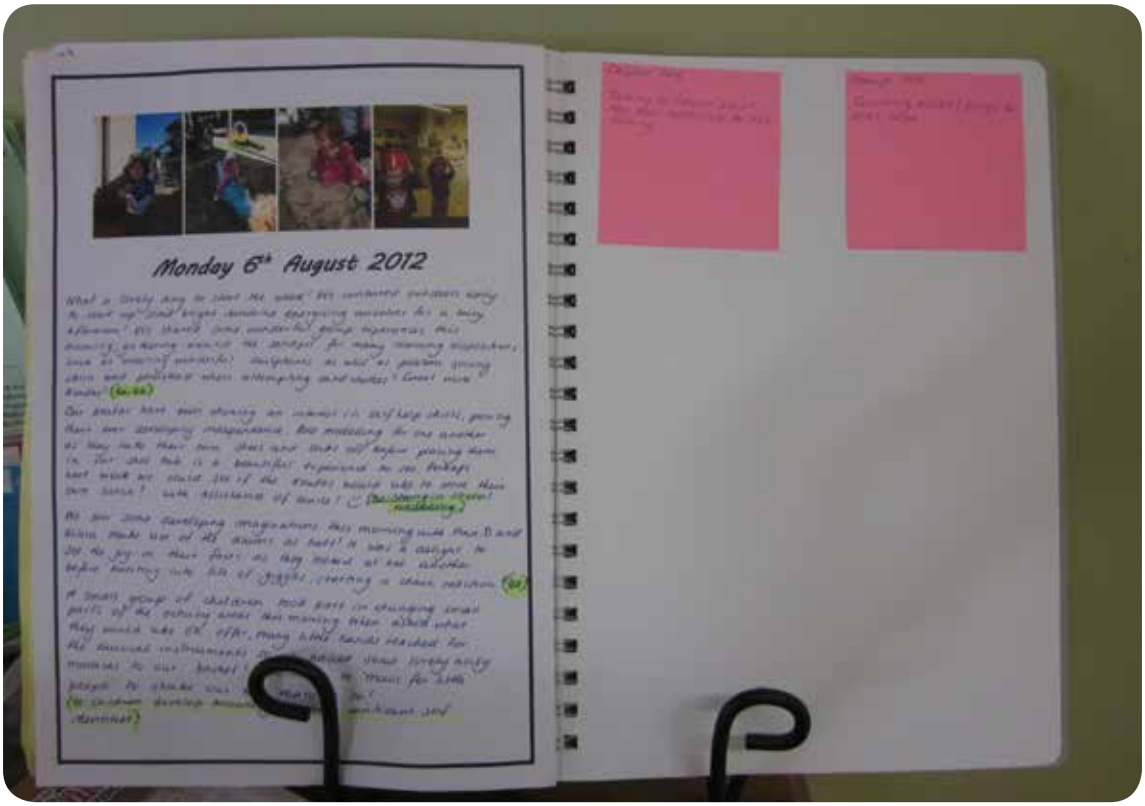
- Use your professional knowledge and understanding of children and families to plan for each child's play and learning.
- Use the EYLF and FSAC to inform your plans. Make appropriate links to the principles, practices and / or learning outcomes.
- Consult with children and families on an on-going basis.
- Plan environments, opportunities and experiences to support play and learning.
- Plan for children to learn from each other.
- Use your interactions to promote play and learning.
- Plan intentional teaching strategies that will support and extend children's learning.
- Develop strategies and tools to monitor and assess children's play and learning.
- Develop methods to make the planning process visible to children and families.

4. Act/Do

- Implement plans in collaboration with children, families and educators.
- Create opportunities and environments that support play and learning.
- Actively engage with children to support and co-construct learning.
- Use the EYLF and FSAC to guide the way plans are put into practice.
- Use your professional judgment to vary plans in response to children's needs and emerging interests.

5. Review/Reflect

- How do your observations / assessment of children's learning inform future curriculum plans?
- Critically reflect on how your curriculum could be improved (what worked well and what didn't).
- Evaluate children's learning, developing skills through play and link them to the learning outcomes where appropriate.
- Reflect on your interactions and teaching strategies. How could they be improved?
- To what extent were children and families involved in curriculum development?
- Use the EYLF and FSAC as a lens for reflection of your own actions. Think about the principles and practices of the framework.
- Reflect on your processes for planning, documentation and assessment. Do they reflect the learning frameworks?
- Make changes where appropriate to inform future curriculum plans.



An Example of the Planning Cycle - In Action

Steps	Example of practice
1.Collect Information	Observations collected from educators over the past two weeks show Jack interacting with his peers in more respectful ways. Discussions with Jack's parents also reinforce this behaviour and provide more examples of Jack interacting positively with his siblings and other peers.
2.Question/ analyse	Educators discuss the information they have collected and are aware that it demonstrates Jack progressing towards an element of Learning Outcome 1 – 'children interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect'. They reflect on Jack's interests and strengths and have noticed he currently enjoys a range of construction experiences, particularly Lego and blocks. Educators question what intentional teaching strategies could be used to support Jack further and they agree that they will create more opportunities to role model respectful behaviour themselves.
3.Plan	Through their knowledge of the EYLF and their understanding of Jack, the educators are able to consider ways to plan for Jack's learning. They have planned to continue with the construction experiences Jack enjoys and also introduce other construction experiences to the curriculum. They will use these play experiences, routines and other opportunities throughout the day to promote respectful group play and behaviours.
4.Act/do	The educators have also discussed their role in Jack's play and learning and have planned to be more intentional in reinforcing Jack's respectful behaviour during planned and incidental experiences. They will role model respectful behaviours and acknowledge the respectful behaviour of all children.
5.Reflect/ review	The educators will share their ongoing observations and insights about Jack and will continue to seek input from his family. They will reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and learning strategies to support and extend Jack's positve interactions with others. Their reflections will assist them to make ongoing curriculum decisions that continue to enhance his emerging skills and behaviour.

It is also important that you reflect on the principles and practice of the EYLF and FSAC, as these elements provide an important platform to guide the way plans are implemented.

Myth about the EYLF and FSAC

Current myths around planning include the notion that 'planning' is no longer required and programs should simply emerge from children's interests. This is not the intent of emergent curriculum as educators play an important role in making curriculum decisions.

Documenting Your Curriculum

It is important for all educators working in your service to have a clear understanding of the current requirements regarding documentation. All services implementing the NQF are required to have an **educational program in place** that is displayed and accessible to families. (NQS element 1.1.4)

Methods of Documenting the Curriculum

Documenting your curriculum can take many forms and may include the following:

- Wall plan
- Journal
- Folder
- Diary
- Visual displays

Curriculum documentation must be relevant and up to date. It should be responsive to children's current and emerging interests, strengths and capabilities. Therefore documenting your curriculum months or even weeks in advance is not a good idea. When documenting and displaying your curriculum, remember the most important question to ask yourself is – ***who is this for?*** Everything that goes into your curriculum plans should aim to support and enhance children's learning and development. It is not about what it looks like on the wall, or so that families are impressed with everything you are doing, your curriculum is for the children so they need to be the focus in ALL curriculum decisions.

Documentation and Assessment of Children's 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 on-going learning. In this way, assessment becomes part of the day to day process of teaching and learning. It is an integral rather than separate activity in the curriculum development process.'

(p.14, Drummond, 2003)

Documentation and Assessment

Documentation and assessments of children's learning and development give you a starting point with which to build your curriculum on.

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

Element 1.2.3 Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program

The purpose of documentation is to make children's play and learning visible, and record the way in which educators plan the curriculum. In some services, such as OSHC, there will be a stronger emphasis on ***play and recreation*** and this will be reflected in the methods and content of the curriculum documentation. Other service types such as LDC and FDC will focus more on ***learning,*** and will use documentation to identify and extend children's learning. This is often described as ***assessment*** as it captures the journey of learning and progress made by children in an early childhood service.

Why is Documentation and Assessment Important?

Documentation and assessment enables educators in partnership with families, children and other professionals to:

- Communicate about children's learning and progress.
- Determine children's progress towards learning outcomes and what might be hindering their progress.
- Identify children who may need additional support.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learning environments, experiences and teaching strategies.
- Plan for children's current and future learning.
- Plan collaboratively with children.
- 'Reflect on pedagogy in relation to children, contexts and community' (p. 17, EYLF: p.16 FSAC).

Methods of Documentation

You can select from the following methods or create your own ways to document and assess children's learning.

- **Narratives** – running records, anecdotes, learning stories, jottings, educator's self reflections, children's self reflections, parent reflections.
- **Samples** – artwork, drawing, writing, time samples, event samples.
- **Language transcripts** – word lists, transcripts of conversations, interviews, transcripts of reading, creating texts, webs, curriculum pathways, mind maps.
- **Visual representations** – photographs, diagrams, sketches, charts, surveys, feedback forms.
- **Video and audio recordings**

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

Element 1.2.1 Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.

When selecting methods of documentation it is important for you to consider which methods will be meaningful for children and families, and manageable for you. Using a variety of methods and tools will assist you to build a holistic picture of the child and reflect on the effectiveness of the documentation methods you have chosen.

This information can be collected and presented in the following ways:

- Portfolio
- Communication book
- Scrapbook
- Folder

The following questions may be useful to assist you in reflecting on 'what' you observe and record, ask yourself:

- ✓ Does this information highlight significant change or progress in children's play, learning and development?
- ✓ Have I collected enough evidence over time and in a range of situations?
- ✓ Does it include several viewpoints and voices – educators, child, and family?
- ✓ Have I made the learning visible to children and families through evaluation and references to the EYLF, FSAC?
- ✓ Does it show links to past learning and future plans?

How Much Documentation Do I Need?

You need to consider 'quality over quantity' as there are no specific requirements regarding **how many pieces of documentation are needed** for each child over a set period of time or whether the educational program needs to be planned and documented daily, weekly or monthly. This will be influenced by many factors, including:

- the number of children;
- how often they attend the service;
- educator involvement; and
- planning time and resources.

While it may be useful to consider a range of ideas and formats from other sources, it is important that the methods of documentation and assessment are developed within your own service to meet your specific needs. Remember – that what works for one child, family or educator, may not work for all.

Another myth surrounding documentation is that evaluation is no longer required. As seen in the planning cycle, **reflection and evaluation are key components of the planning process**. It is also a requirement of the NQF that educational programs are evaluated and that this information is used to inform future plans. As such, evaluation and reflection should be clearly documented, discussed and shared with others.

National Quality Framework

For children who are preschool age and under, this documentation should include:

• Assessments of the child's development needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program.

• Assessments of the child's progress against the learning outcomes of the educational program.

For children who are over preschool age:

Documentation should focus on evaluations of the child's wellbeing, development and learning within the educational program.

(Adapted from the NQF Resource Kit, 2011)

Thinking about your practice

1. What methods do you currently use to document and assess children's learning and development? Are these methods manageable for your service? If not what could you change?

2. How do you link an assessment of a child's learning to the *learning outcomes*?

3. How do your assessments of children's learning inform future curriculum plans?

Brainstorm

Intentional Teaching and Your Curriculum

'Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.' (p.15, EYLF)

'Educators who engage in intentional actions recognise that learning occurs in social contexts, and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning.' (p.14, FSAC)

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

Element 1.2.2 Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning.

The practice of ***intentional teaching*** **requires you to engage with children in meaningful ways that support and extend their learning**. Intentionality requires you to use your professional knowledge to plan a curriculum that supports intentional practices. However you also need to consider how you use 'teachable moments' and incidental opportunities to enhance children's play and learning.

Intentional teaching can include the following strategies and techniques:

- ✓ Demonstrating
- ✓ Role modelling
- ✓ Instructing
- ✓ Explaining
- ✓ Scaffolding
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Affirming
- ✓ Questioning
- ✓ Challenging
- ✓ Encouraging
- ✓ Collaborating
- ✓ Negotiating
- ✓ Researching
- ✓ Revising and revisiting

QIP TIP

Identify what intentional teaching practices you already use to support the implementation of your curriculum. Did you identify any areas for improvement? If so, document them in your QIP and think about how you can enhance your own intentional teaching practices from the list above.

Case Study

Scenario of Intentional Teaching

During an observation educator Kerry notices that Jamie (aged 2 years, 2 months) regularly plays in the block corner, he runs straight over to it when he arrives in the mornings. Rather than introducing new activities to Jamie or encouraging him to play elsewhere, Kerrie decides to build on his current interest and add some open-ended play materials. She spends time setting up the block area the next morning before Jamie arrives and adds some small world people and farm animals, along with a piece of felt and a green towel (not sure of how or if he will play with them).

What happened?

When Jamie walked through the door and saw the blocks, he smiled and ran straight over as normal. He begins positioning the felt to make what looks like a roof and uses the green towel as grass. He then spends time carefully grouping the animals and the people. Jamie spent more time than normal in the block area today and asks Kerrie if she will put out the same things again tomorrow. This also gives Kerri ideas for further curriculum plans.

What intentional teaching strategies did Kerri use?

Educator Kerrie used intentional teaching practices of *listening and scaffolding* to support Jamie's learning and development.

Working in Partnerships with Families

'Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families'. (p.12, EYLF)

Planning and documenting your curriculum will be more meaningful to children and families when they are actively involved in the process. Knowledge of family values, culture, communication styles and barriers can assist you in developing ways of sharing information that will actively engage families. As children and families change within a service, it is essential that **all educators** continually reflect on whether the practices they are using still meet the needs of new and existing families.

To assist families in understanding the EYLF and FSAC, it is important to provide information that is clear and easy to understand. It is also critical for families to understand how the framework(s) will better support their child's play and learning, and the importance of their involvement in this process. The following strategies can be useful to encourage family engagement:

- ✓ Clear information about planning, documentation and assessment, and the role of families in this process.
- ✓ Seeking feedback from families about the best way to share information.
- ✓ Inviting contributions from families.
- ✓ Providing space for the parent's voice in documentation.
- ✓ Posing specific questions as part of an observation or learning story.
- ✓ Documenting parent feedback and conversations.
- ✓ 'Take home' toy and journal to capture family experiences.
- ✓ Use of families' native language in documentation.
- ✓ Displaying examples of parent feedback, stories and contributions.
- ✓ Use of email and other forms of technology.
- ✓ Providing real time, space and opportunities for families to engage with documentation.

For more ideas on how your service can work in partnership with families, visit www.pscalliance.org.au for the *How To: Build Strong Partnerships with Families*

Summary of Recommendations

Key Topics	Recommendations
National Quality Framework	• Understanding and engaging with the NQF. • Accessing relevant documents and related resources. • Assessing your current practices against NQS QA 1 and document any strengths / areas for improvement in your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). • Compliance with the national law and regulations.
Early Years Learning Framework **Framework for School Age Care**	• Understanding and engaging with the EYLF, FSAC. • Planning curriculum and programs that are informed by the EYLF, FSAC. • Using the EYLF, FSAC to guide practice. • Demonstrating evidence of the EYLF, FSAC in documentation and assessment.
Theoretical perspectives	• Understanding a range of theoretical perspectives. • Awareness of current research and evidence.
Philosophy	• Reflecting on the professional philosophy of individual educators. • Developing and/or reviewing the service philosophy annually. • Involving key stakeholders, including children.
Planning	• Reflecting on current processes and methods of planning. • Involving all educators, children and families. • Developing meaningful planning processes. • Documenting evidence of the planning cycle.
Documentation and assessment	• Reflecting on current methods of documentation and assessment. • Involving all educators, children and families. • Developing meaningful methods of documentation and assessment. • Ongoing reflection and evaluation of documentation and assessment methods.

Intentional teaching	• Understanding the purpose of intentionality. • Implementing strategies to support intentional teaching. • Ongoing reflection of teaching strategies. • Documenting evidence of critical reflection.
Engaging families	• Building trust with each family. • Understanding values, expectations and family practices. • Valuing the contributions and role of families. • Engaging in shared decision-making. • Developing meaningful ways of sharing information. • Responding to parent feedback and incorporating their ideas and opinions into the program.

Conclusion

Planning and documenting children's play and learning is an important part of your professional role. Using your assessments of children's learning (various methods) this provides you with the tools to create a meaningful and responsive curriculum for children. It also enables you to make children's learning visible and show evidence of what and how you promote children's learning and development.

Using this resource, the suggested readings and other sources can assist you to reflect on your current practices and consider how they can be improved to enhance children's wellbeing and holistic learning and development.

References

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, (2011). The Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA, NSW.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (2009). Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (2011). My Time, Our Place, the Framework for School Age Care, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, (2010). The Educators Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT.

Goodfellow, J. (2009). *Early Years Learning Framework: Getting Started.* Early Childhood Australia.

Gowrie Australia, (2010), *Assessment in the Early Years.* Gowrie South Australia.

Patterson, C., & Fleet, A., (2011). Planning in the Context of the EYLF: Powerful, practical and pedagogically sound. Early Childhood Australia.

Raban, B., Marghetts, K., Church, A., & Deans, J. (2010) *The Early Years Learning Framework in Practice.* Early Childhood Australia.

Raban, B. (2011) *Assessment for Learning.* Pademelon Press NSW, Australia.

Useful websites

www.acecqa.gov.au – Australian Children's education and Care Quality Authority

www.pscalliance.org.au - PSC Alliance

www.childaustralia.org.au - Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia (Child Australia)

www.mytimeourplace.com.au – My Time, Our Place

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/ - Early Childhood Australia (NQS Professional Learning Program)

Contacts

For information on jurisdiction specific provisions that apply, contact:

Australian Capital Territory: Children's Policy and Regulation Unit
Community Services Directorate
GPO Box 158
Canberra City ACT 2601
Phone: (02) 6207 1114
Fax: (02) 6207 1128
Email: OCYFSChildrensServices@act.gov.au
Website: www.dhcs.act.gov.au

New South Wales: NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate
Department of Education and Communities
Locked Bag 5107
Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: 1800 619 113
Fax: (02) 8633 1810
Email: ececd@det.nsw.edu.au
Website: www.dec.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory: Quality Education and Care Northern Territory
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 4821
Darwin NT 0801
Phone: (08) 8999 3561
Fax (08 8999 5677
Email: qualityecnt.det@nt.gov.au

Queensland: Department of Education and Training
PO Box 15033
City East QLD 4002
Phone: 1800 637 711
Fax: (07) 3234 0310
Email: ecec@deta.qld.gov.au
Website: www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood

South Australia:

Department of Education and Children's Services
Licensing and Standards
Level 15, 31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8226 0085
Fax: (08) 8226 1815
Email: decdchildcarelicensing@sa.gov.au
Website: www.decd.sa.gov.au/ybsproviders/

Tasmania:

Department of Education
GPO Box 169
Hobart TAS 7001
Phone: 1300 135 513
Fax: (03) 6233 6042
Email: childcare.comment@education.tas.gov.au
Website: www.childcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
GPO Box 4367,
Melbourne, VIC 3001
Phone: 1300 307 415
Fax: (03) 9651 3586
Email: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au
Website: www.education.vic.gov.au

Western Australia:

Department for Communities
Childcare Licensing and Standards Unit
Level 1, 111 Wellington Street
East Perth WA 6004
Phone: (08) 6210 3333 or 1800 199 383
Fax: (08) 6210 3300
Email: ccluinfo@communities.wa.gov.au
Website: www.communities.wa.gov.au

Professional Support Coordinators National Alliance
www.pscalliance.org.au

Australian Capital Territory
Communities@Work
www.actpsc.com.au

New South Wales
Children's Services Central
www.cscentral.org.au

Northern Territory
Child Australia
www.childaustralia.org.au

Queensland
Health and Community Services Workforce Council Inc.
www.pscq.org.au

South Australia
Lady Gowrie Child Centre
www.pscsa.org.au

Victoria
Gowrie Victoria
www.gowrievictoria.org.au

Western Australia
Child Australia
www.childaustralia.org.au

Tasmania
Lady Gowrie Tasmania
www.psctas.org.au