

A VISION FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING

All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life.

Fundamental to the Framework is a view of children's lives as characterised by *belonging, being* and *becoming*. From before birth children are connected to family, community, culture and place. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's first and most influential educators. As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.

BELONGING

Experiencing *belonging* – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. *Belonging* acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of *belonging*. *Belonging* is central to *being* and *becoming* in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.

“You belong in your house with your family” – Dong

BEING

Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world.

“If you want to be a mermaid you can imagine” – Jazmine

Being recognises the significance of the here and now in children's lives. It is about the present and them knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities, and meeting challenges in everyday life. The early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also about the present.

BECOMING

Children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. They are shaped by many different events and circumstances. *Becoming* reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow. It emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

“When you keep planting plants you become a gardener” – Olivia

Learning outcome:

a skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families.

Early childhood settings:

long day care, occasional care, family day care, Multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, creches, early intervention settings and similar services.

The Framework conveys the highest expectations for all children's learning from birth to five years and through the transitions to school. It communicates these expectations through the following five Learning Outcomes:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators.

The Framework provides broad direction for early childhood educators in early childhood settings to facilitate children's learning.

It guides educators in their curriculum decision-making and assists in planning, implementing and evaluating quality in early childhood settings. It also underpins the implementation of more specific curriculum relevant to each local community and early childhood setting.

The Framework is designed to inspire conversations, improve communication and provide a common language about young children's learning among children themselves, their families, the broader community, early childhood educators and other professionals.



ELEMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework puts children's learning at the core and comprises three inter-related elements: Principles, Practice and Learning Outcomes (see Figure 1).

All three elements are fundamental to early childhood pedagogy and curriculum decision-making.

Curriculum encompasses all the interactions, experiences, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development. The emphasis in the Framework is on the planned or intentional aspects of the curriculum.

Children are receptive to a wide range of experiences. What is included or excluded from the curriculum affects how children learn, develop and understand the world.

The Framework supports a model of curriculum decision-making as an ongoing cycle. This involves educators drawing on their professional knowledge, including their in-depth knowledge of each child.

Working in partnership with families, educators use the Learning Outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning. In order to engage children actively in learning, educators identify children's strengths and interests, choose appropriate teaching strategies and design the learning environment.

Educators carefully assess learning to inform further planning.

Curriculum:

in the early childhood setting 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'. [adapted from Te Whariki]

Pedagogy:

early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The diversity in family life means that children experience *belonging*, *being* and *becoming* in many different ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning.

Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated.

Play is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

Children actively construct their own understandings and contribute to others' learning. They recognise their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning, and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them, including their learning.

Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities.

Educators' practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children's learning.

Children's early learning influences their life chances. Wellbeing and a strong sense of connection, optimism and engagement enable children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

The Learning Outcomes section of the Framework provides examples of evidence of children's learning and the educator's role.

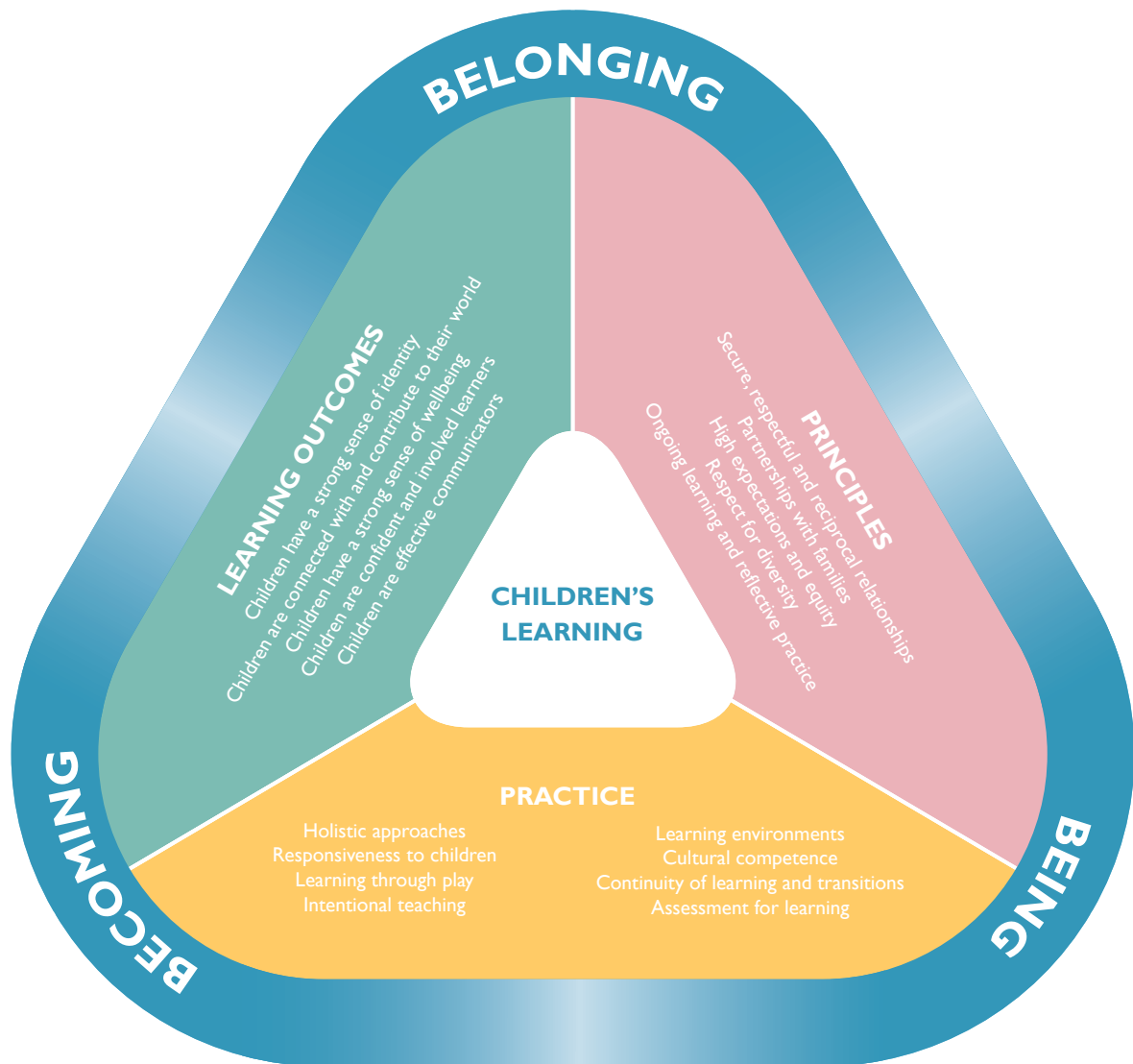


Figure 1: Elements of the Early Years Learning Framework

Involvement:

is a state of intense, whole hearted mental activity, characterised by sustained concentration and intrinsic motivation. Highly involved children (and adults) operate at the limit of their capacities, leading to changed ways of responding and understanding leading to deep level learning. (adapted from Laevers 1994)

Dispositions:

enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations, for example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence. (Carr, 2001)