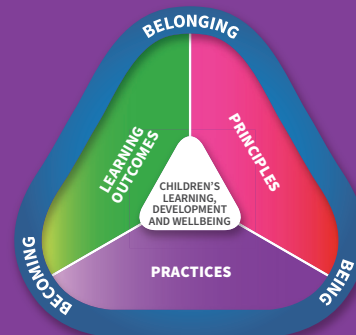


PRACTICES



The Principles of early childhood pedagogy underpin practice. Educators draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to inform curriculum for children's learning, development and wellbeing by:

- adopting holistic approaches
- being responsive to children
- planning and implementing play-based learning with intentionality
- creating physical, temporal, intellectual, social and emotional environments
- valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families
- providing for continuity in experiences and enabling effective transitions
- analysing, assessing, monitoring and evaluating children's learning, development and wellbeing in ways to understand, acknowledge and document children's progress and their achievement of Learning Outcomes.



Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches

Holistic approaches recognise the integration and connectedness of all dimensions of children's learning, development and wellbeing. When educators take a holistic approach, they pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and cognitive aspects of learning. They are attuned to children's actions and promote embodied learning, understanding that children's minds and bodies are intertwined in the learning process. In this approach children's voices, actions and movements are important considerations for planning and assessment. While educators may plan or assess with a focus on a particular outcome or component of learning, they see children's learning as integrated and interconnected. They recognise the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning. They see learning as a social activity and value collaborative learning and community participation.

Educators promote holistic approaches to learning and teaching. They understand the integrated nature of the Framework, and the connection between the various elements of the Framework. The integration of the Vision, Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes are key to providing for children's holistic learning. When planning, teaching and assessing learning, educators engage with all of these elements, thinking about the principles underpinning their practices and the impact of their practices on children's engagement and achievement in learning, development and wellbeing.





An integrated, holistic approach to teaching and learning also focuses on connections to the natural world. Educators foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.

Responsiveness to children

Educators are attuned to, and respond in ways that best suit, each child's strengths, capabilities and curiosity. Knowing, valuing and building on all children's strengths, skills and knowledge strengthens their motivation and engagement in learning. Educators are aware of, and respond to, the strategies used by children with additional needs to negotiate their everyday lives. They respond to children's expertise, cultural traditions and ways of knowing, and the multiple languages spoken by some children, including by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Educators are also responsive to children's funds of knowledge (experiences and understandings), ideas, sociality and playfulness, which form an important basis for curriculum decision-making. In response to children's evolving ideas and interests, educators assess, anticipate and extend children's learning, development and wellbeing via open-ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning. Educators are attuned to, and actively listen to, children so they can respond in ways that build relationships and support children's learning, development and wellbeing. They make use of planned and spontaneous 'teachable moments' to scaffold children's learning.

Responsive learning relationships are strengthened as educators and children learn together and

share decisions, respect and trust. Responsiveness enables educators to respectfully enter children's play and ongoing projects, stimulate their thinking and enrich their learning.

Play-based learning and intentionality

Play-based learning approaches allow for different types of play and recognise the intentional roles that both children and educators may take in children's learning. When children play with other children and interact with adults, they create relationships and friendships, test out ideas, challenge each other's thinking and build new understandings. Play provides both a context (a place or space where children play) and a process (a way of learning and teaching) where children can ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Play-based learning provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine.

Play-based learning with intentionality can expand children's thinking and enhance their desire to know and to learn, promoting positive dispositions towards learning.

Children act intentionally and with agency in play. This is demonstrated when children make decisions, and with what and with whom to engage and invite into their play. Neural pathways and connections in the brain are stimulated when children are fully engaged in their play as they make plans, create characters, solve problems, develop self-awareness and learn how to socialise, negotiate and think with others. Children's immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy *being*.



Educators are intentional in all aspects of the curriculum and act deliberately, thoughtfully and purposefully to support children's learning through play. They recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that joint attention, interactions, conversations and shared thinking are vitally important for learning.

Educators act with intentionality in play-based learning when they, for example:

- plan and create environments both indoor and outdoor that promote and support different types of play for children's active engagement, agency, problem solving, curiosity, creativity and exploration
- take different roles in children's play or make purposeful decisions about when to observe and when to join and guide the play
- extend children's learning using intentional teaching strategies such as asking questions, explaining, modelling, speculating, inquiring and demonstrating to extend children's knowledge, skills and enjoyment in thinking and learning
- sustain, extend, challenge and deepen children's ideas and skills through shared thinking and scaffolding learning
- use a range of strategies to plan, document and assess children's learning in play-based experiences
- plan and implement worthwhile play-based learning experiences using children's interests, curiosities and funds of knowledge
- assist children to recognise unfair play and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community
- act as resourceful and respectful co-learners and collaborators with children
- support children's progress in play-based learning through the thoughtful extension of children's knowledge, skills and concept development
- notice and work sensitively with very young children's intentions in exploring, practicing and experimenting through play
- acknowledge children's enjoyment and sense of fun and playfulness in learning, particularly when engaged in group play
- provide a balance between child-led and adult initiated and guided play
- plan opportunities for intentional knowledge building, as well as recognising and utilising opportunities for spontaneous teaching and learning
- use routines, rituals and transitions to foster learning, development and wellbeing
- join in with children's play experiences, such as taking a role in children's pretend play, to understand and build on children's ideas to support and foster learning
- facilitate the integration of popular culture, media and digital technologies which add to children's multimodal play.

Learning environments

Learning environments include physical, temporal, social and intellectual elements. Welcoming, safe and inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environments reflect, respect, affirm the identities, and enrich the lives of children and families. Educators plan and provide both active and calming spaces, as well as times in the daily schedule for active and quiet play. They provide individual as well as group spaces that respond to children's interests and capabilities. Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the strengths, culture, languages, interests and capabilities of each child, and reflect aspects of the local community. Well planned environments cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and allow for reasonable adjustments where required. Educators also invite children and families to contribute their ideas, interests and questions to create unique and familiar environments. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, these contributions can assist in building an intercultural space where both Western and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are shared.

Outdoor learning spaces are a feature of Australian learning environments. They offer a vast array of possibilities for physical activity and learning experiences not available indoors. Access to play spaces in natural environments may include plants, trees, edible gardens, open spaces, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These and other outdoor spaces invite open-ended play and interactions, physically active play and games, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural world and the interdependence between people, animals, plants, lands and waters providing opportunities for children to engage with all concepts of sustainability through environmental education.

Educators where possible participate and offer opportunities for children to learn on Country and seek more information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections and relationships with Country. All children benefit from learning on Country and from Country. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their spirituality is connected to Country, and the connection is strong. It is in their relationships and how they communicate with their ancestors, families, kinship systems and communities. It is in their connection to the land – the trees, waterholes and mountains.

Indoor and outdoor environments support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, educators,

families and the broader community. They promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning. Children should experience sustained, appropriate periods of time in both the outdoor and indoor environment for optimal learning to occur. Approved providers and educators are aware that the accessibility of resources and the way in which learning spaces are set up may enable some children and prevent others from participating. In this way approved providers and educators attend to all aspects of the environment to enable all children to participate, succeed in learning and develop positive feelings of self-worth.

Materials enhance learning when they reflect what is natural and familiar, and introduce novelty to provoke interest and more complex and increasingly abstract thinking. For example, digital technologies and media can enable children to access global connections and resources and encourage new ways of thinking. Environments and resources can also highlight our responsibilities for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment. They can foster hope, wonder and knowledge about the natural world, as well as thinking about social and economic sustainability.

Educators can encourage children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions to the learning environment. They can support engagement by allowing time for meaningful interactions, by providing a range of opportunities for individual and shared experiences, and by finding opportunities for children to actively participate and contribute to their local community.

Cultural responsiveness

Educators who are culturally responsive, respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, doing and *being* and celebrate the benefits of diversity. They honour differences and take action in the face of unfairness or discrimination. Being culturally responsive includes a genuine commitment to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in all aspects of the curriculum. Being culturally responsive also includes respecting and working collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. Cultural responsiveness is evident in everyday practice when educators demonstrate an ongoing commitment to developing their own cultural knowledge in a three-way process with children, families and communities.

Educators view culture and the context of the child's family and wider community as central to children's sense of *being* and *belonging*, and their

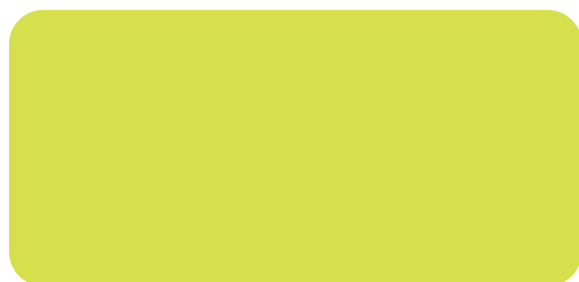
successful lifelong learning. They assist children to be culturally competent and responsive by taking actions in the face of unfairness and discrimination. Educators collaborate with children, their families and members of the community to build culturally safe and secure environments and use this knowledge to inform their practice.

Cultural responsiveness is more than awareness of cultural differences. It includes learning about multiple perspectives and diversity in all its forms, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, family and individual diversity. It is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural responsiveness encompasses:

- awareness of one's own world view and biases
- respect for diverse cultures
- respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as the nation's custodians of the land
- gaining knowledge of cultural practices and world views
- communicating effectively and sensitively with people, recognising diverse ways of communicating and interacting across cultures
- everyday practices, including routines and rituals
- decisions and actions that are responsive to children and families' context.

Culturally responsive educators are:

- knowledgeable of each child and family's context
- active in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in all aspects of the curriculum
- implementing anti-bias approaches, including social justice approaches to address racism/bias in the setting/community
- embedding democratic and fair practices in their setting, including the importance of being a responsible citizen
- supporting children to take culturally responsive actions in the face of unfairness/discrimination
- collaborating with colleagues, children, families and their communities to build culturally safe learning spaces.



Continuity of learning and transitions

Children bring their individual, family and community ways of *being*, *belonging* and *becoming*, often called funds of knowledge, to their early childhood settings. Educators who know and build on children's funds of knowledge help them to feel secure, confident and connected to familiar people, places, events and understandings. This reinforces each child's sense of *belonging*. Children, families, educators and teachers in schools all contribute to successful transitions between settings.

Children's identities change as they move from one setting to another. Educators assist children to negotiate changes in their status or identities, for example, when they move to a new room in their early childhood setting or begin full-time school. As children make major transitions to new settings (including to school) educators from early childhood settings and schools commit to sharing information about each child's knowledge and skills so learning can build on foundations of earlier learning.

Transitions can be everyday occurrences between routines, play spaces or settings, as well as bigger transitions including from home to starting at school or an early childhood setting, or from one early childhood setting to another. All transitions offer opportunities and challenges. Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations and ways of doing things. In partnership with children and families, educators ensure that all children have an active role in preparing for transitions. They assist children to understand the traditions, routines and practices of the settings to which they are moving and to feel comfortable with the process of change.

Continuity is where children experience familiar or similar ways of *being*, doing and learning from one setting to another. Experiencing greater continuity assists effective and positive transitions. Educators work with families to promote continuity, for example, knowing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's kinship connections, parenting practices and other aspects of cultural life can inform positive transitions. Continuity between home and the early childhood setting is important for families as well as children. Continuity in the transition to school can be supported through discussions, access to familiar materials and routines, and timetables that facilitate greeting and departure rituals. Some families and children will need more support when they transition into an early childhood setting or school. Educators work collaboratively with each child's new educator,

teachers in schools and other professionals to ensure a successful transition.

Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing

Assessment and evaluation are part of an ongoing cycle that includes observing, documenting, analysing, planning, implementing and critical reflection. Assessment refers to the gathering of information about children's learning, development and wellbeing, undertaken over time using a range of strategies. Evaluation refers to educators' critical reflection on and analysis of this information, and consideration of the effectiveness of their planning and implementation of curriculum for children's learning. Using assessment and evaluation information, educators in collaboration with children, families and other professionals formulate short- and long-term learning goals for each child.

Assessment

Assessment strategies are selected by educators for different purposes. Assessment strategies include observations, documentation, reflections and gathering of information about, and with, children and their families. Through assessment, educators describe and interpret children's actions, interactions and communications to consider their achievements, capabilities and wellbeing in relation to the Learning Outcomes. Educators understand the importance of including children's voices and contributions to assessment. Assessment strategies that are inclusive, culturally and linguistically relevant, and responsive to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and regulatory capabilities of each child will acknowledge each child's abilities, strengths and competencies. Through assessment,



educators recognise and celebrate not only the giant leaps children take in their learning but the small steps as well.

Educators utilise 3 broad types of assessment.

1. Assessment 'for children's learning', also known as formative assessment, is when information about what children know, can do and understand is gathered and analysed to inform pedagogy and planning. Educators use a variety of strategies to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, learning dispositions, skills and understandings. Used effectively, formative assessment strategies can capture the different pathways that children take in their learning journeys and make the process of learning visible to children and their families, educators and other professionals.
2. Assessment 'of children's learning', also known as summative assessment, is when educators review children's achievements and capabilities at specified or selected timepoints, such as during their transition into the early childhood setting, mid-year, or for their transition to school. Educators make professional judgements about children's learning progress over time, to show the 'distance travelled' by learners. In their summative assessments, educators can critically reflect on how children have engaged with increasingly complex ideas and participated in increasingly sophisticated learning experiences.

Summative assessment can also be based on children's attainment of developmental milestones, which can be helpful if educators have a concern about a child's learning abilities or wellbeing. Educators can use such information to start a conversation with families and for potential referral to other professionals for diagnostic assessment.

3. Assessment 'as learning' is used to facilitate children's awareness, contributions and appreciation of their own learning. Children's voices and contributions to assessment can be captured using strategies such as child portfolios or 'talking and thinking floorbooks' to involve children in documenting learning. This allows children to reflect on their learning and develop an understanding of themselves as learners, what they like to learn, and how they learn best.



When children, families and other professionals are included in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate assessment processes, new understandings can emerge that would not be possible if educators rely solely on their own perspectives. Developing inclusive assessment practices with children and their families demonstrates respect for diversity, and helps educators, families and children make better sense of the assessment information. Assessment undertaken in collaboration with families can assist them to support children's learning and empower families to act on behalf of their children within and beyond the early childhood setting.

Evaluation

Evaluation practices involve educators' critical reflection on the effectiveness of their planning and implementation of curriculum for children's learning as part of the planning cycle, both for and with children. Evaluation practices can also involve gathering feedback from families. Evaluation focuses on improving aspects of practice to amplify children's learning, such as learning, teaching and assessment strategies, the environment, use of resources or time. Educators' evaluations and critical reflection can be undertaken through strategies including review and discussion with colleagues, watching others practice, coaching and mentoring and professional journaling.

Educators critically reflect when they pose questions about new ways of thinking and doing in their evaluations, such as: 'How effective, meaningful, and relevant was the planned

program?'; 'What difference did we make, and for whom?' They critically reflect on their own views and understandings of theories, worldviews, evidence-based research, and practice to focus on:

- the experiences, resources, strategies and environments they provide and how these link to the intended Learning Outcomes
- the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered, and the approaches taken to enable children's learning
- the extent to which they know and value the culturally specific knowledge about children and learning that is embedded within the community in which they are working
- each child's learning in the context of their families and children's funds of knowledge so that the learning opportunities and experiences offered build on what children already know and bring to the early childhood setting
- questioning assumptions and unacknowledged biases about children's learning and expectations for children
- incorporating pedagogical practices that reflect knowledge of diverse perspectives and contribute to children's wellbeing and successful learning and is inclusive and appropriate for each child or small groups of children.

Evaluation enables educators in early childhood settings to review how well they are doing, learn from their experience, identify gaps and priorities. Educators consider how they could build on successes and take action to improve their practices.