



The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program



Documenting learning

Setting the scene

Recent e-Newsletters have focused on planning for, identifying and recording children's learning in relation to the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and its five Learning Outcomes.

Educators have generously offered examples of their planning and recording templates for this and subsequent newsletters, hoping that colleagues will appreciate that this is 'work in progress' and that current models will change as they grow more knowledgeable and confident with the new framework. They are willing to share their experiences, but recognise that one model is unlikely to work for everyone and that highly professional early childhood educators have to design and adapt formats to suit their different circumstances.

Examples from practice

1. Building on children's learning

In the Toddler Room of a long day care service in South Australia, team members plan a broad program for a term, based around the EYLF and its Learning Outcomes. First, they discuss what children's needs and interests are; then they talk about noticeable progress individual children have made in recent weeks. They decide, for example, that children are showing 'emerging autonomy and sense of agency' and are beginning to 'respond to diversity with respect'. They note some evidence for this learning and development, list some key experiences that educators will provide and design strategies to consolidate and extend the learning. These educators are highly 'intentional'. They have long-term plans, observe children and use these notes as a springboard for planning and providing experiences.

Figure 1: Bilby's program Outcome 1.1

Term 1, 2011 Bilby Program

The Early Years Learning Framework

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.

This is evident when children:

1. Increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others.
2. Begin to initiate negotiating and sharing behaviours.

Educators promote this learning when they:

1. Provide children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours.
2. Provide time and space for children to engage in both individual and collaborative pursuits.

Strategies:

Children are showing a sense of ownership and community during certain times of the day where they help pack away toys, wipe tables etc. Educators will ensure that they involve and support children in daily jobs, finding resources, replenishing resources and helping them to feel responsible about the expectations of particular areas.

In a family day care setting in Qld the educator provides for, analyses, evaluates and reflects on children's learning in relation to EYLF Outcomes. The example relates to Outcome 2.4 and Outcome 4.1. She shares these experiences and records of children's learning with families and invites their input through family excursions, discussions and using parents' expertise in the program.

Figure 2: Program plan

Program Plan: Bayside Family Day Care

Week ending: 18 February 2011 Theme: Natural Science

Observation	Analysis/ Interpretation	Planning & Implementation of Activities & Learning Experiences
<p>Rylan, Lucy and Ella are very interested in 'living things' (plants, animals, birds, insects, fish, marine creatures) and their distribution.</p> <p>They love to use our 'Light-up' world animal globe, where we can see Australia and the other continents, as well as the oceans and all of the different animals.</p>	<p>Our Science Table, (which has many local specimens collected by the children, as well as 'scientific things' like torches, magnets, magnifying glasses) shows the deep interest these young children have in the world around them, starting in the backyard.</p> <p>Our visits to the nearby Point Halloran Conservation Area have been enthralling, as we find koalas, Eastern Water Dragons, egrets, waterhens, ducks, tadpoles, butterflies and moths.</p> <p>Similarly, our local beach offers shells, coral, cuttlefish, jellyfish and seaweed.</p>	<p>A trip to the local Indigiscapes Centre is planned by Bayside FDC next week, to explore and learn about the natural environment, including waterholes, small streams, bushland and rainforest, with native birds, animals and insects.</p> <p>There is an abundance of trees, plants and flowers to see, with a ranger to guide everyone on the walking trails. There are even botanical gardens and a playground.</p> <p>The children have keenly watched our video on how the caterpillar turns into a butterfly.</p>
Evaluation	Reflection	Extension & Enrichment
<p>The Outcomes or Indicators from the <i>Early Years Learning Framework</i> are demonstrated as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children becoming socially responsible, and showing respect for the environment in exploring local wildlife; inferring how the animals live in the bush; predicting (hypothesising) how they find food; examining the inter-dependence between the land, people, plants and animals. 2. Developing dispositions for learning; e.g., curiosity, cooperation, confidence, imagination, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence and reflectivity. 	<p>Children learn to use their sensory capabilities and natural dispositions with increasing awareness, skill and integration.</p> <p>They purposely explore and respond to their world.</p> <p>This is reflected consistently, over and over again.</p>	<p>Introduce the children to the 15 volume DVD National Geographic 'Ultimate Wildlife Film Collection':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wild babies 2. Giant pandas 3. Megafish 4. Elephants 5. Turtles 6. Killer toads 7. Serengeti 8. Zebras 9. Seals 10. Cheetahs 11. Eagles 12. Octopus 13. Wolf 14. Kangaroos 15. Dinosaurs.

2. Mapping learning to outcomes

In a different preschool setting, educators try to capture a learning episode when it offers evidence of significant learning and development for an individual child or group; that is, they try not to *describe everyday activities*, but to *focus on the learning* they see. They then analyse the episode to identify which Learning Outcomes are most in focus and use it to inform the next steps in their planning.



The key thing is to capture the learning in a form that suits educators and their context, and in a way that enables them to interpret what is happening. This is where the EYLF Outcomes come in. Educators analyse the learning record, noting which Outcomes the child is demonstrating progress in relation to, then planning to build on strengths and support areas where less progress may be evident.

Figure 3: Children's program

Children's program

Fortnight: 31 January–11 February 2011

An, Moram, and Aakif were outside enjoying washing the dolls at water play in the blue trough. An looked up at educator and said 'My dolly clean now'. She dipped her sponge into the water, and squeezed out the water using both hands. Moram looked up shyly when the educator asked her if her doll was clean.

Aakif was exploring the texture of his yellow sponge by rubbing it up and down with his hand. He turned his head to watch some other children playing. An called out to the educator, 'Look, a bubble!' as she held out her blue sponge. An laughed when the bubble popped. Moram listened as the educator asked her, 'Does your dolly like a bath?' She smiled shyly, and then continued to wipe the doll.

Moram found a frog water book in the water and began to wash it. An noticed and asked the educator for it. She accepted another similar one with a smile, and immediately began to turn the pages to look at the pictures. Moram noticed and looked at the educator. She allowed the educator to open the clasp and began to turn the pages while looking at An who was talking to another educator about her doll.

An picked up the frog book and listened as the educator talked about frogs to her. Moram, who was quietly listening, opened her frog book and began to look at the pictures intently. Aakif went on playing, splashing the water over his doll.

Learning Outcomes:

- Building secure relationships with one and the more familiar educators (1).
- Communicating their needs for comfort and assistance (1).
- Responding to suggestions and ideas from others (1 & 2).
- Showing interest in other children and being part of the group (2).
- Engaging in enjoyable, reciprocal interactions using verbal/nonverbal language (2 & 5).

Future planning:

- For educators to continue to support all children's interests through talking/discussion and interactive play.
- For educators to add natural materials to water play—shells, fish, large stones—and talk about them to children.

3. Documenting what happened

A preschool in the ACT has gardens nearby and they are developing a garden in the setting. First, staff wondered: 'What do children think "a garden" is?'

They went on a walk around the gardens with the children, talking and listening, taking photos and making notes of children's comments. They recorded both 'what was planned' and 'what happened', then designed experiences and conversations to challenge children's assumptions about a garden: 'Does it have to be pretty?'

They reflected on what happened and linked the learning to the most relevant Learning Outcomes in the EYLF.



Figure 4: University gardens



Monday, 21 February 2011

The children went out for a walk around the university gardens to see what was the same and different to their garden.

What is in the university gardens?

Joe: These gardens are not good because they are not green.

Stella: Tomatoes, flowers, two dogs, trees, a chicken coop but no chickens yet.

What was planned?

Have conversations with children about what sorts of things they have in their own gardens at home and record ideas.

What happened? What was changed? Why?

The whole group went out for a walk around the university gardens and talked about what was the same and different in their home gardens and at Wiradjuri. The children talked about what they thought it meant if something was called a garden.

Where to from here? What are some learning possibilities?

Challenge ideas of what a garden is? For example, does it have to have flowers and look 'pretty'?

What can we use gardens for?

What do we want our gardens at Wiradjuri to look like?

What do we want to use them for?

Linking it to the EYLF:

This experience is most relevant to Outcomes 1, 2 and 4. It encouraged children to take note of what is in their local community. The children are being encouraged to relate this to their homes and to build a sense of security, familiarity and identity. The experience is grounded in strong ideas around children's active participation in their own learning and supporting their confidence to investigate on their own.

4. Using the moment

Because staff in this setting plan flexibly and adapt to changing circumstances, they were able to maximise the learning opportunities presented when a truck dropped off some soil for the garden in their setting. All settings are capable of being responsive like this to changing circumstances and being prepared to 'grasp the teachable moment'. We just have to 'look for learning' rather than 'stick to routines' for their own sake.



Figure 5: Garden planning



Wednesday, 23 February 2011

The Giraffes observed a truck that dropped off soil to go in our garden. They had some conversations with the truck driver about how the soil came out of the back.

Lottie, Mylee, Stella, Alexander and Hayden started to draw about the shape of the garden and what was in it.

The Bees started to work out some things they wanted in the garden and found pictures in magazines.

What was planned?

Originally planned to create a plan of the garden beds and start to think of the possibilities for how we could make our garden.

What happened? What changed?

Most obviously, the truck provided a great deviation, but also presented a new avenue for learning.

Where to from here? Learning possibilities?

- Why do we need soil?
- What are we going to do?
- How does the truck work?
- 'Where has it gone?'—Liam M

Linking it to the EYLF

The spontaneity of the experience makes linking slightly more difficult, but it can be related to Outcome 4: Involved learners and Outcome 5: Effective communicators—as children demonstrated curiosity and interest, but also skills around investigating, forming questions for the truck driver and the teachers and making comments about what was happening.

Conclusion

One of the aspects of documenting learning that becomes obvious through these examples is that educators are realising that it's only legitimate and valuable to link their planning and record of what happens in a learning episode to *some* of the EYLF Learning Outcomes. It may be tempting to suggest that all experiences in the daily program contribute to learning in all Outcomes. But that's neither valid, nor helpful. We need to be more 'intentional' than that.

We need to plan specific learning experiences with particular Outcomes in mind. We need to observe and record children's learning in relation to particular Outcomes. And, we need to track the progress of individual children in relation to each Outcome, so that we can intervene if progress in particular aspects seems delayed.

These challenges are not new; we have always struggled to capture the important learning in a busy day. As 'Miss Jojo' says on the Forum:

In my 12 years in this industry, I have never seen or used a perfect system for documenting ...

What I do know is that I will have a Daily Diary as a primary document made up of significant jottings and anecdotal observations made during the day and a reflection/evaluation of where we might go from there.

Carmel Richardson, in her RIPS *Respecting diversity* (pp. 11–13, Richardson, 2011), gives some excellent examples of documenting and analysing children's learning and the *Educators' Guide to the EYLF* (DEEWR, 2010) provides further scenarios for discussion.

Future e-Newsletters will canvas issues and debates around documenting learning and provide examples of how educators in different settings are recording and analysing the learning of individual children.

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References

DEEWR (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) (2010). *Educators Belonging, Being and Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra: DEEWR.

Richardson, C. (2011). *Respecting diversity*. Research in Practice Series. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia.



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