



The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program



Learning Outcomes

Getting to know the Learning Outcomes

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and the National Quality Standard (NQS) are two sides of the same coin; educators who embrace the EYLF and reflect it in their daily work with children and families will be in a position to meet the requirements of the seven quality areas of the NQS. Demonstrating that they are providing for children's learning in relation to the five Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and offering evidence that children are progressing in all Outcome areas will be a significant part of the NQS assessment.

This e-Newsletter is the first on the topic of 'Outcomes' but it won't be the last. The topic will be revisited and examples from a range of practice provided over several newsletters, as well as the discussion being carried forward through the online Forum and the EYLF PLP Workshops.



Learning Outcomes

The EYLF (Glossary p. 46) defines a Learning Outcome as:

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

It explains further (p. 19) that:

The five Learning Outcomes are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children across the birth–five age range.

There are some key words in the EYLF definitions and explanations:

- Educators have a responsibility to 'actively promote' Learning Outcomes—it's not just up to children to acquire the skills, knowledge and dispositions.
- The learning is 'complex and integrated'—it's not a matter of saying 'children doing this activity are engaged with Outcome 1'.
- The Framework applies to all children—educators need to hold high expectations for the learning of all children and to facilitate and maximise that learning, regardless of children's abilities and backgrounds.

The Educators' Guide to the EYLF breaks down the concept of 'outcomes' even further (p. 42) when it says:

The Framework identifies three types, or levels of outcomes for planning for, facilitating and monitoring all children's learning:

- *'Belonging, being and becoming are the big picture aims ...'*
- *'The five Learning Outcomes with their 19 sub-elements are broad, longer term goals ...'*
- *'Points of evidence are ... often discrete skills or content that enable children to achieve the Learning Outcomes.'*

Why these five Outcomes?

The EYLF (p. 5) is part of a set of strategies designed to contribute to the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) vision that:

All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation.

The EYLF (p. 5) particularly supports Goal 2 of the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians that:

All young Australians become:

- *successful learners*
- *confident and creative individuals*
- *active and informed citizens.*

The sentiments behind Goal 2 are evident in the wording of the Learning Outcomes with 'identity' and 'wellbeing' underpinning success in learning and becoming a responsible citizen.

Getting started with Outcomes

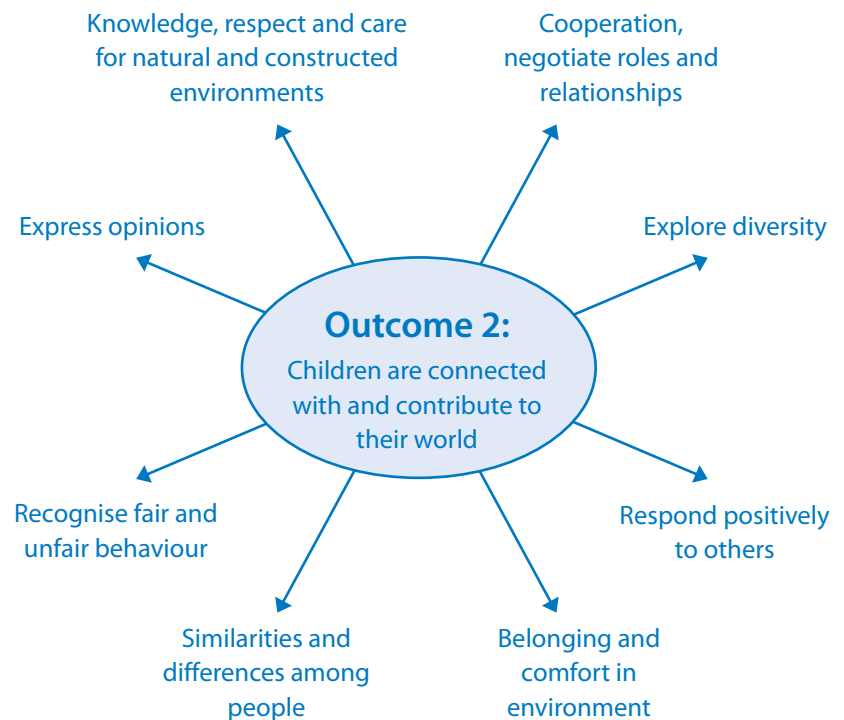
Educators have had varied initial reactions to the idea of 'outcomes'. When they begin to work with the EYLF Outcomes they realise that they are rich and broad descriptions of lifelong learning, not the 'tick and flick' bits of mastery that they might fear.

Educators have had various ways of 'getting started' with Outcomes, but the main message coming through is 'you have to get to know the EYLF Outcomes really well and look at what they mean in your own room or setting before you can *think* about planning or recording with them'.

A number of educators have suggested some possible steps:

- Look at the big headings of the five Outcomes.
- Talk with colleagues and put those ideas and goals into your own words.
- Look at your daily and weekly programs and identify where you are providing for children to learn and grow in those ways—using the big Outcomes as an 'audit' or 'reflective tool' to find strengths and gaps.
- Look at the 'sub-element' and the dot point evidences under that and observe the children in your setting.
- Ask: 'Do we see children expressing their ideas and feelings? What does this look like with babies? With toddlers?'
- Add examples of evidences from your observations of children.
- Ask, for example: What opportunities are we giving children to 'share their cultural ways with others?'
- Add dot points to the right hand 'what educators do' column.
- Write up a learning story; pick which Outcomes seem evident in children's learning.

Figure 1: A visual snapshot of learning outcomes—Gowrie, QLD





Educators made some important points as they shared their tentative engagement with the EYLF Outcomes:

Outcomes highlight aspects of learning we might otherwise miss, or pay scant attention to; with preschoolers, Outcomes 3, 4 and 5 may be most evident and yet some children may be struggling with aspects of Outcomes 1 and 2—Identity and social responsibility.

At the moment, I can see what we do to promote an outcome, but not what babies do to evidence it. I can see babies communicating and beginning to deal with technology in their toys and play, but not 'using ICT' as it seems to be described in Outcome 5. It will be interesting to see the EYLF in action when babies start here at the beginning of the year.

I don't think you have to refer to Outcomes every time you notice something!

Figure 2: Interpreting an everyday digital experience—Townsville, QLD



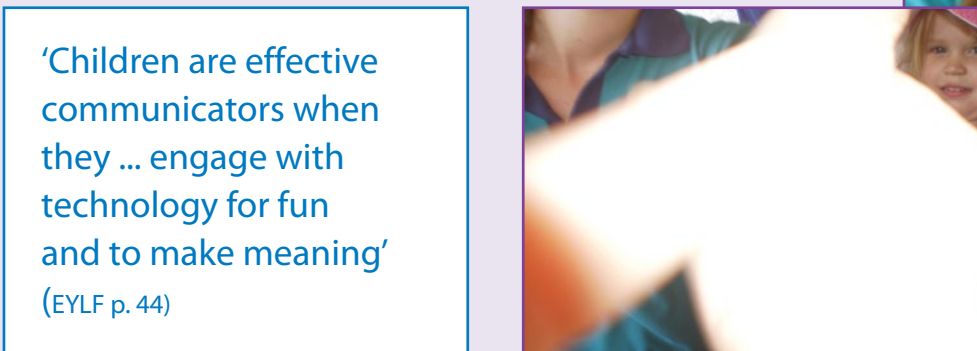
Strike a pose!

I was taking a photo of Ella M and Tara pretending to call people on the phone and type on the computer when Tara asked if she could take a photo.

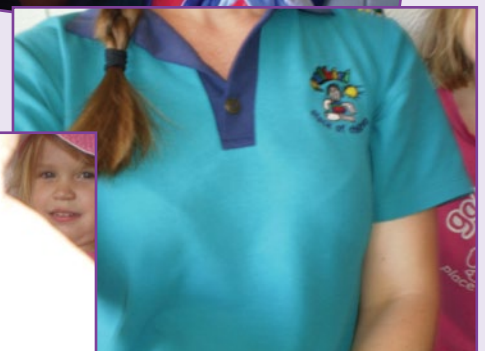
Soon everyone had a go—Tara, Ella, Meg, Isaac, Josh, Lucy and Elli (I think that was everyone?).

They were funny to look at once they had all taken a photo. It can be tricky to point and shoot without moving sometimes.

Thanks for the photo fun everyone!



'Children are effective communicators when they ... engage with technology for fun and to make meaning'
(EYLF p. 44)



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'Mapping' what we see to Outcomes

Educators in various settings have begun to look at their practice with Outcomes in mind. They are looking for evidences of children's learning and pondering what that means for the educators' responses. They are realising that there is not a linear relationship between what a child says and does and a single Outcome; they are recognising that the Outcomes are interrelated.

Vignette 1:

An educator noticed that some babies were becoming interested in their own 'portraits', pointing to them, smiling and babbling.

Response

The educator made sure the photos were at 'baby height' and changed the portraits regularly to show how each individual had grown and the things they were doing in the setting. She invited families to contribute pictures of family activities and began taking two children at a time to find images relating to them, talking about what she saw.

She interpreted the babies' interest and engagement as evidence of their growing sense of identity (Outcome 1) and that they were beginning to be aware of connections, similarities and differences between people (Outcome 2).



Vignette 2:

At another setting, a four-year-old girl commented that her family was 'fasting' because of Ramadan. Other children wondered if Ameera was hungry, but she explained that young children don't have to fast and 'it's a private thing that you do' and 'later we celebrate together'.

Response

The educator decided it was important for children to learn about different rituals, customs and beliefs. She invited families to talk about their spiritual traditions in the pattern of their lives. Using a calendar, they marked feast days and festivals important to families with children in the setting.

She interpreted the children's interest in Ameera's story as evidence that they were capable of 'responding to diversity with respect'. She saw Ameera's sharing of her family practice as evidence that she is 'developing a knowledgeable and confident self-identity' (Outcome 1) and becoming 'a confident and involved learner' (Outcome 4).

Vignette 3:

Two boys, aged four, had built a cityscape with blocks. They spent all morning on it, talking things through and adding to each other's ideas. They told the educator they didn't want other children to wreck their construction because they might want to go back to it (adapted from Richardson, (in press)).

Response

The educator suggested they could make a sign. She supplied pens and paper and talked with the boys about what should be written on their sign. She modelled writing '**Don't touch!**' and together they made the sign.

She interpreted these events as evidence that the boys understood some of the purposes of writing and signage and that they were capable of creating a sign with adult modelling (Outcome 5). She also recognised that the boys had shown persistence, collaboration, negotiation, experimentation and problem solving (Outcome 4).

Small steps and giant leaps

One of the challenges of working with Outcomes is tracking the progress of individual children.

Sometimes, this progress appears quite sudden, although the growth has been occurring over a long time.

Vignette 4:

In a Qld pre-kinder program, for example, educators were surprised when Meg volunteered the information that she had gone with her family to the Jacaranda Festival in Grafton and she had some photos to show the other children. They were impressed with Meg's growth in confidence from the shy child earlier in the year. They invited Meg's Nanny and Mum to hear Meg's Show and Tell; she brought a Jacaranda blossom and photos and spoke with delight about her experience. The educators built on Meg's contribution by helping children to find Grafton on a map and placing the blossom in the art space for children to draw and paint.

At other times, progress can seem like a small step, but it's a significant milestone for a particular child.



Vignette 5:

Amelia has an intellectual disability; she has no oral language. When the group of three-year-olds were chanting a familiar rhyme, Amelia became animated and smiled. The educator recognised this as evidence that Amelia was beginning to relate to others and learning to communicate. She held Amelia's hand and invited the group to do the rhyme again with lots of gusto, as she and Amelia 'joined in'.

On the online EYLF PLP Forum, Psher (2010) has commented that 'most of the learning we recognise and celebrate is hardly a giant leap, but rather a small step the child takes ...'

The challenge is to learn to recognise the small step when it occurs, to respond to it in ways that consolidate children's confidence and competence and to record the distance travelled so that it can be celebrated and inform the educator's support for the child's next steps in learning.

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References

Psher (2010, October 19). *Thinking about assessment* [msg 8]. Message posted to <http://forums.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/showthread.php?2-Thinking-about-Assessment>.

Richardson, C. (in press). *Respecting diversity: Articulating early childhood practice*. Canberra, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.



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