



The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program



Documenting learning 2

Setting the scene

This series of e-Newsletters—8, 9 and 10—is focused on planning for and documenting learning. As educators across the nation work with the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and apply it to their programs, they are understandably keen to see how fellow educators are reflecting the EYLF and its Learning Outcomes in their documentation.

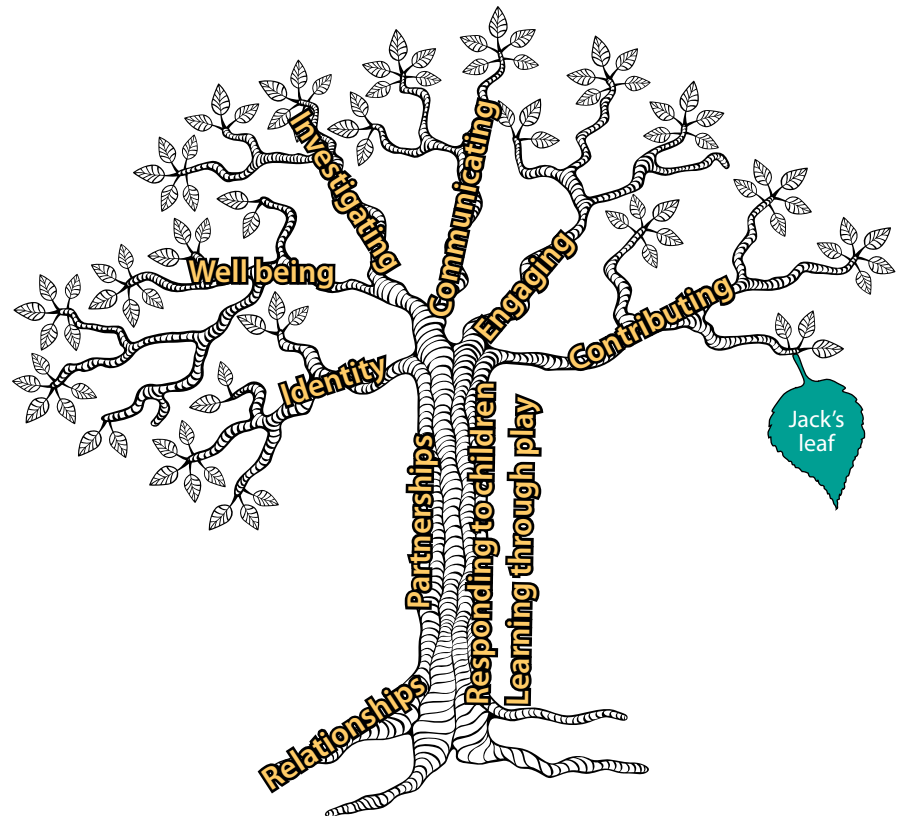
Educators in a range of settings, including Family Day Care, Long Day Care and Preschool have generously provided examples of their 'work in progress' as they experiment with ways to talk about and represent learning.

Representing learning

In a Long Day Care setting in South Australia that uses family groupings, staff in one of the rooms have developed their own way to represent the EYLF for fellow educators and families. They have drawn a tree, with the '3 Bs' as the roots, the Principles and Practices as the trunk, the Outcomes as the branches and examples of children's learning as the leaves.

Representing their program visually in relation to these components shows any gaps in planning and provision and the labels change regularly to show the different teaching and learning emphases over several weeks. The leaves charting the focus and learning for individual children are updated often and important moments filed in children's portfolios for them and their families to examine.

Figure 1: Tree



Belonging:

Relationships
Security
Knowing children
Respecting diversity;
being understood

Being:

Exploring
Creating
Great individuals!
Knowing yourself

Becoming:

Independence
Self-sufficiency
Confidence in
doing things
Building on prior
learning

Recording individual learning

It is a professional responsibility to chart each child's progress in relation to the Learning Outcomes and to plan for and provide experiences and interactions as individual children show emerging knowledge and skills, or when they need extra support to move on in learning.

Example 1

A setting in rural NSW uses the following template to record what staff know about each child's learning, what goals they and families may have for the child and how they will stimulate and enrich that learning.

Figure 2: Dorothy Waide Centre

Dorothy Waide Centre for Early Learning

Child's name: _____ D.O.B. _____

Learning Outcomes	Date	What we know?	Where we want to go!	Strategies
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				

What we know: What do we know about the child now, what skills and attitudes and thinking do they have that influences their learning and engagement.

Where we want to go?: What outcomes do we (carers, parents and child) want for the child in each of the five key learning areas.

Strategies: What will we put in place to provide opportunities for the child to grow in thinking, skills and attitude.

Example 2

As mentioned earlier in this e-Newsletter, in the setting that uses a tree image to represent learning, educators record an evaluation of each child's learning in relation to the EYLF Outcomes in the form of a 'leaf'. Key examples of learning are later placed in the child's portfolio. Here is 'Jack's learning record' after a particular interaction:

Figure 3: Lady Gowrie SA— Jack's 'leaf'

The image shows a stylized leaf graphic with a teal outline and a light teal fill. The text inside the leaf is as follows:

Jack 10 Feb 2011

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity.
Children feel safe, secure and supported ...

1. To help Jack explore and feel safe and secure in his environment in his new room. To help him explore his interest in dinosaurs. To help him explore his inside/outside environment together.

Making a dinosaur world together with water, trees etc. Talking about dinosaurs; asking questions, looking through books etc.

Help him to build attachment with more than one carer, a sense of belonging and to communicate and respond to his needs.

2. Help support Jack with his portfolio; added documentations, exploring together.

Evaluation 8/3/2011

Jack and I have been enjoying spending some time together looking through his portfolio at the dinosaurs. He also enjoyed sharing this with Ruby. They shared and pointed at the pictures together, talking about what they could see. Jack talked lots and it was a beautiful moment together.

Made a learning story.

Example 3

A Family Day Care centre keeps detailed records of the learning and interests of individual children. The educator offers the following records which relate to Outcome 2 and Outcome 4.

Figure 4: Bayside FDC Reflective diary for Rylan

Reflective Diary for Rylan

Family Day Care – Week Ending Friday 11th February 2011

Dear Evette

Our fourth week started out with Tuesday's pouring rain. However, the weather improved and we resumed our outdoor activities on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday with fine, warm weather.

We had a lot of fun with the hose in the sandpit. Rylan, Lucy and Ella played happily for hours, pouring water into selected containers and sand play equipment, testing their hypothesis that water can occupy many different-shaped containers—but where does all that water go when it spills on the sand?

Figure 5: Bayside FDC Reflective diary for Rylan (CONTINUED)



Interestingly, Rylan caught a cricket in the red bucket. He was very fascinated with it. After his careful observations he put it back in the garden and enjoyed filling up the watering cans. He did an excellent job, watering the tree ferns and ground covers. Thank you, Rylan.

Outcome 2.1: Children belong to groups and cooperate

Outcome 2.4: Children show appreciation and care for environments; children explore, infer, hypothesise and predict...

Outcome 4.1: Children use curiosity, cooperation and persistence

Outcome 4.2: Children investigate, observe and inquire



The new computer programs for young children are a hit and Rylan, Lucy and Ella are finding their way around them with great expertise. Rylan can now turn on the computer and navigate his way to the program he needs. Lucy loves doing the spider dot-to-dot and takes great delight in computer art, both painting in colours and drawing with the mouse. Good job, Lucy! Next week, Lucy and Ella might like to try the French program, which has many applications to explore, such as French culture, history and language. Rylan has already discovered—and loves—images of the Eiffel Tower, la Louvre (art gallery, with statues), and the French countryside. We follow this up by discussing where France is on the illuminated globe beside the computer.

Outcome 5: Children use ICTs to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking





Debates and myths about documenting learning

Early childhood educators who are coming to know the EYLF often wonder: 'when, how and how often' should we record children's learning? Educators are busy and their core business is being with and interacting with children.

There is some debate about 'learning stories', what the term means and how valuable the model may be as a format for documenting children's learning. The term originated in New Zealand where the *Te Whāriki* early childhood curriculum recommends '... capturing children's learning in a story format' (Carr, 2001). The story '... gives the context of the learning, the contribution of participants and the learning they demonstrate.'

In Australia, some educators are using a similar format and the stories go home for family celebration and feedback. On the other hand, some educators say that composing such detailed descriptions of learning events takes time away from being with children. Certainly, there has to be a balance between 'teaching' and 'assessing' and any documentation is only as valuable as the information it provides to support children's next stage learning.

There are some strange 'myths' developing about the EYLF, regulations and the Quality Standard. There are no regulations that state that educators *have to use* learning stories as a documentation format. However, educators *are required* to have written evidence of a planning cycle which has the elements of observing, noticing, recording, interpreting, planning and evaluating. There also needs to be written evidence of children's progress towards the Learning Outcomes.

Conclusion

In terms of recording learning, educators who are learning to use the EYLF suggest that it's 'horses for courses'. That is, for many children, some kinds of learning, such as individual skills and physical development, can be simply recorded with a 'sticky note' on an individual record sheet. Some educators are skilled in taking digital photographs and then adding notes and captions when they have a break. These are working notes to support planning decisions and it is usually not necessary to re-type them.

It is a better use of time for educators to compile a summary of key events and key learning for display for families and an interpretation and evaluation of each child's learning for individual portfolios. Portfolios also need to be more than just 'happy snaps'; they should contain information about each child's personality, interests and needs and tell educators and families about what learning is happening and how it is best supported.

We also need to keep a balance about how often we try to record learning for each child. When we focus on individual children and their learning, the number of 'entries' we document for each child will vary according to their needs and the amount of time they spend in the setting. The important thing is to 'keep an eye on' every child in relation to all of these key aspects of learning, over a period of time.

As respected educator and co-author of the EYLF, Anne Kennedy says:

'Quality, not quantity of records is a useful mantra.'

Future e-Newsletters will follow up the theme of planning and documenting and move into the issues around validly assessing the learning and progress of individual children.

Jenni Connor

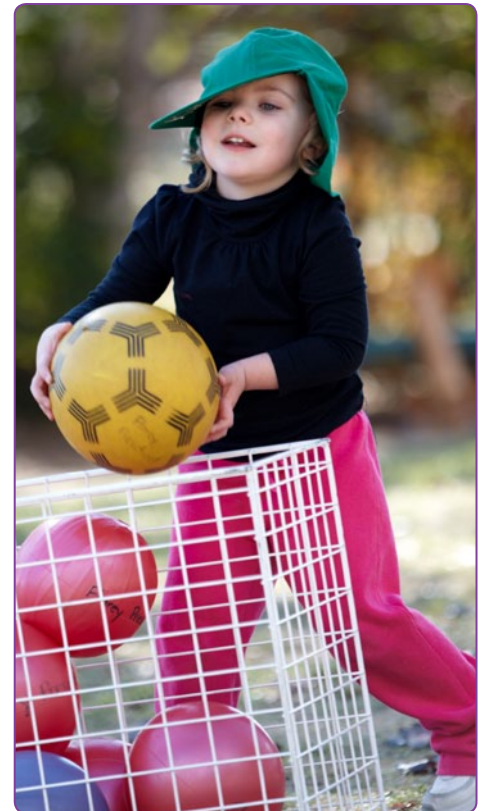
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Acknowledgements

Bayside Family Day Care, Brisbane, QLD
Dorothy Waide Children's Centre, Griffith, NSW
Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Adelaide, SA

References

Carr, M. (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing.



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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