

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE POLICY



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1 NQS

QA1	1.1	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
	1.2	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
	1.3	Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

2 National Regulations

Regs	73	Educational programs
	73	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
	75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
	76	Information about educational program to be given to parents

EYLF

3

L01 – L05	All Learning Outcomes under the Early Years Learning Framework will be addressed through our Policy and practices.
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4 Aim

This policy will support our services to deliver engaging and relevant curriculum that is based on our philosophy and current research about how children learn. We aim to observe and document each child and their learning in an authentic and meaningful way. In our environment, we aim to support children to be successful learners by promoting skills and learning dispositions that provide strong foundations for life-long learning.

5 Related Policies

The Kids' Uni Policies and Procedures apply to Kids' Uni North, Kids' Uni South, Kids Uni CBD, Kids Uni IC

Inclusion Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-003)

Excursion Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-024)

Orientation for Children Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-041)

Physical Activity Promotion Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-045)

Physical Environment Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-046)

Record Keeping and Retention Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-049)

Relationships with Children Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-050)

Digital Technology and Social Media Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-057)

Transition to School Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-059)

Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy (CHI-ADM-POL-070)

6 Philosophical underpinnings of our curriculum

Kids' Uni is driven by our beliefs and philosophical thinking on how children learn. In order to best support children with their growth and development we draw on a number of approaches to influence our curriculum decision making and implementation.

a) Respectful relationships

We see strong, reciprocal and respectful relationships as being the foundation for our work with children, families and communities. We believe that the Circle of Security approach is a respectful and empathetic way for us to ensure that children feel safe, secure and have a sense of belonging. We understand that attachment is critical for children's development and use a Key Educator approach to foster these attachments. Children can only learn and reach their full potential when they feel safe and secure and this underpins our pedagogical practices.

b) Play-based learning and approach to curriculum

Children are born with an intrinsic desire to play. As stated within the Early Years Learning Framework, 'play can expand children's thinking and enhance their desire to know and learn.' (2009, p.15). Play enables children to explore and understand the world around them in an organic way. As such, our curriculum is designed to ensure learning is open-ended and relevant to a child's current interests, strengths and emerging abilities. A play-based approach allows educators to intentionally embed various learning objectives in child-led, play experiences. Additionally, play-based learning supports children's autonomy as they explore and understand the world in their own unique way.

c) Current research

Research surrounding children's growth and development is a continuous journey. As such, it is important that our practice remains current by staying professionally connected and up to date. Journal articles, conferences, strong relationships with the University of Wollongong and professional development sessions provide valuable information that guide and strengthen our practice. At Kids' Uni, we value the many opportunities our educators have to learn new and innovative ways to best support children's development and early education.

d) Role of the educator

Our curriculum and pedagogical practice is driven by intentional, considered and meaningful interactions with children. Educators are not passive bystanders in children's learning. We believe that play-based learning is at its most effective, when educators guide and scaffold children's play. Educators utilise a wide range of teaching strategies to support children's learning. As educators plan thoughtful and relevant learning experiences, children develop and strengthen skills that are crucial for lifelong success.

e) Care as curriculum

Routines and transitions are viewed as learning moments and are an integral part of early learning. As such, education and learning is embedded within care and routine experiences. Intentionality and respect play a major role when we are caring for children. We recognise that with each interaction comes an opportunity to support various learning objectives. From mealtimes to handwashing, children will be consistently supported to learn and explore their world alongside peers and educators.

f) Dispositions for learning

Early education is more than the development of skills and abilities. We recognise that the early years is a crucial time in a child's life in which they begin to develop dispositions for learning. We believe our focus should be promoting a joy for learning and supporting children to view themselves as capable and confident. Additionally, through fostering dispositions such as curiosity, problem solving, confidence and resilience, we will support children to develop skills that prepare them for lifelong learning.

g) Cultural responsiveness and Inclusive practices

We recognise that culture plays an integral role in how children relate to others and their environment. We know that cultural safety is a vital component of the relationships we have with families and high quality learning environments. Moreover, having an appreciation and understanding of each child and the culture that influences the person they are, is a crucial element of our curriculum and pedagogical practices. In addition, we will continually strive to embed First Nations perspectives, history and culture within our practice and curriculum. We value our relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders and the wisdom they hold about the land on which we work, Dharawal Country.

7 Overarching regulations and frameworks

Our Educational Programs and Curriculum are delivered in accordance with the National Quality Framework, including three key documents:

- National Law and National Regulations
- National Quality Standard (NQS) Specifically -

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Standard 1.1 - Program

Standard 1.2 – Practice

Standard 1.3 - Assessment and Planning

- Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

Our work is based on the Practices, Principles and Learning Outcomes included in the EYLF which are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
3. Children have a strong sense of well-being.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators.

8 Educational Leadership

Our Educational Leaders are:

Kids Uni South	Kelly Hennessy
Kids Uni North	Louise Windisch
Kids Uni CBD	Shanae Macdonnell
Kids Uni iC	Nicole Bray

The Role of the Educational Leader:

Our educational leaders play a vital and influential role in creating an effective and meaningful curriculum. Their role is to guide and support educators to implement the curriculum whilst embedding their Service Philosophy throughout the planning cycle. In addition, Educational Leaders will continually promote the importance of the early years and the significant impact high quality care and education has for children. In practice this means our Educational Leaders will:

- Guide educators by providing curriculum direction to ensure children achieve learning outcomes within the Early Years Learning Framework
- Advocate for high quality early education pedagogical practice
- Inspire curriculum development in partnership with families by placing value on, and integrating the knowledge of their child
- Create a culture of professional enquiry where educators can collaborate, question, research and reflect on programming and practice
- Support educators to engage with research and theory surrounding best practice
- Lead and promote an ongoing cycle of planning including consistent and meaningful reflective practice
- Support educators to develop pedagogical approaches that are contextual to the service
- Advocate for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within our program and practice
- Strengthen practice and planning through creating and maintaining relationships with the broader community.

Curriculum and Pedagogy Support Teacher

This role aims to support the creation of high quality educational programs for children in an early childhood setting by contributing to the strategy, planning and decision making around pedagogy and curriculum. The focus of this role is to support educational leaders to implement the vision and goals developed for each service to ensure that educational programs, interactions and teaching strategies are aligned with the service philosophies.

In practice the Curriculum and Pedagogy Support Teacher will:

- Support the planning, implementation and reflection of educational programs
- Use critical reflection to drive practice and continuous improvement
- Stay up to date with current theory and research
- Have a solid understanding of and ability to articulate philosophical beliefs and the implications of these in practice
- Develop and maintain professional relationships with educators in order to support their pedagogical growth and development
- Work together with Educational Leaders to support the implementation of high quality pedagogical practice
- Have extensive understanding of and commitment to implement the National Quality Framework and Standards, the service philosophy, and Early Years Learning Framework
- Have an actively inclusive approach which is reflected in interactions with children, families and colleagues
- Develop and maintain positive partnerships with families in which they are supported to be active participants in their child's learning and development.

9 Kids' Uni Educator Practice Guide

This guide was created to support educators in developing and implementing their pedagogical practices across the various parts of their role. The guide is organised into the following sections:

- Planning and Documentation
- Curriculum Content
- Inclusive Practice
- Pedagogical Considerations
- Support Documentation

In addition to supporting our educators, this document provides in depth information surrounding our curriculum and pedagogical practices for families. Through providing clear evidence of how our work is underpinned by various theoretical perspectives, we demonstrate the high level of professionalism we strive to achieve.

10 Implementation of Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

This policy provides evidence of our implementation of all standards and elements within *Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice*. At Kids' Uni, we incorporate many practices, policies and procedures to ensure we exceed in all of these standards.

At Kids' Uni, we implement all elements under *Standard 1.1: Program*, by providing an educational program that strengthens and supports children's early learning and development. In practice this means:

- Curriculum planning and implementation is driven by children's individual needs, interests and skills
- Curriculum and practice decisions are based on Practices, Principles and Learning Outcomes within the Early Years Learning Framework
- Curriculum decision making is informed by the Kids' Uni '*Educator Practice Guide*'
- Children's identity and culture is understood and embraced as educators provide learning experiences that respect each child's individuality
- Planning and implementation focuses on a child's dispositions for learning to support lifelong growth and learning
- Educators follow the ACECQA Planning Cycle with intention, authenticity and reflectiveness
- Children are viewed as confident communicators as their voices are embedded within the planning cycle and curriculum decisions
- Learning is meaningful for children as environments and experiences are developed from their current interests
- Routines and transitions are viewed as critical learning moments and are planned for and reflected upon accordingly

At Kids' Uni, we implement all elements under *Standard 1.2: Practice*, by embedding intentional teaching practices that facilitate the extension of children's early learning and development. In practice this means:

- Children are viewed as experts in their own learning
- Each interaction with children is viewed as a learning moment
- Educators sit alongside children's play to scaffold and extend their learning
- A range of pedagogical practices are embedded to support children's development
- Educators refer to the Kids' Uni '*Educator Practice Guide*' to support their pedagogy and documentation
- Learning environments are strategically developed to facilitate children's learning
- Educators utilise collected data to plan for and implement purposeful teaching moments
- Children use their agency to direct their own learning and exploration
- Learning environments are designed and resourced to facilitate children's autonomy
- Educators support the voice of the child through including them within the planning process

At Kids'Uni, we implement all elements under *Standard 1.3: Assessment and Planning*, by consistently reflecting on and evaluating our practice and its impact on children's learning. In practice this means:

- Reflective practice is a central tenet of our dedication to continually strengthening our capacity to provide high quality early learning
- Participating in reflective practice to encourage professionalism as educators question and consider various theoretical and philosophical perspectives
- Critical reflection is embedded and evidenced in all areas of our work
- Educators adhere to practices outlined within the Kids' Uni '*Educator Practice Guide*'

- Diverse opportunities are provided for educators to participate in reflective practice to ensure all voices and ideas are shared
- Children's development is consistently planned for and evaluated through creating clear and intentional planning cycles
- Individual and group planning is evidenced and accessible for families onsite and remotely through Kinderloop
- Families are encouraged to participate in and/or provide feedback for their child's planning cycle
- Educators consistently engage families in professional and respectful conversations regarding their child's development
- Biannual summative assessments are conducted in consultation with children and families

11 Sources

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 National Quality Standard Early Years Learning Framework

12 Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years and the review will include Management, Employees, Families and Interested Parties.

13 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Next Review	Approved By	Amendment
1	June 2023	June 2026	K.Grose -Children's Services Manager E. Rattenbury - Pedagogy and Curriculum Support Teacher	This policy supersedes the "Education, Curriculum and Learning Policy". Inclusion of the Educator Practice Guide.

EDUCATOR PRACTICE GUIDE



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Introduction

The provision of early education and care is a privilege. Approximately 90% of the human brain develops in the first five years of life, as such, secure attachments and high quality learning environments are crucial for children's future outcomes. Additionally, not only are children the leaders of the future, they are the experts of their current experience. At Kids' Uni, we believe that children are confident learners and when supported, are able to drive the development of their own skills and interests.

Early learning is complex and multi-faceted. We draw upon various philosophical perspectives to ensure that we view and support children from a holistic standpoint. The role of the educator is ever expanding. More specifically, the importance of our interactions, and planning for children's learning has been highlighted in a multitude of research. As Torii, Fox and Cloney state 'educators who can skilfully combine explicit teaching of skills and concepts with sensitive and warm, play-based interactions are critical.' (2017, p.1)

The purpose of the '*Educator Practice Guide*' is layered. Essentially, through this guide we aim to:

- Support educators to build and reflect upon their practice
- Inform families and the wider community of the underpinnings of our educational programs
- Share the various ways in which children learn and develop at Kids Uni
- Advocate for the high level of professionalism that we strive to achieve

This guide is organised into the following areas:

- Planning and Documentation
- Curriculum Content
- Inclusive Practice
- Pedagogical Considerations
- Support Documentation

The '*Educator Practice Guide*' sits alongside the '*Educational Program and Practice Policy*'. Together, these two documents evidence the multitude of pedagogical and curriculum considerations we embed to meet all relevant standards and regulations.

Children's Voices

Educator – "What should your teacher be good at?"

Louis – "Helping me with new friends"

Planning and Documentation

The creation of high quality learning experiences and environments is an in-depth process. At Kids' Uni we plan, program and reflect upon children's development for both individuals and groups of children.

Individual Planning

High quality educational programs focus on an individual child's developmental needs and interests. Furthermore, the process of creating meaningful learning experiences and environments is cyclical. At Kids' Uni we follow the Planning Cycle included within the EYLF, as displayed below:



Each component of the cycle plays a crucial role in creating relevant and meaningful experiences and environments for children. At Kids' Uni, each component of the Planning Cycle is captured and recorded through an online program - Kinderloop. Each element of the cycle encompasses various pedagogical practices that come together to form a holistic view of a child's learning journey.

Observing and Collecting Information:

Data collection is the process in which multiple sources of information are gathered in order to create a solid understanding of the children in our care. The purpose of data collection is to build our knowledge of each child's interests, skills, experiences and needs. Data is collected through various mediums including:

- Partnership forms
- Enrolment forms
- Observations (such as photos, anecdotal records, checklists)
- Work samples
- Conversations with families
- Family posts and/or comments on Kinderloop
- Conversations between educators
- Conversations with children
- Summative assessments
- Information from relevant support services

Data is consistently collected through multiple avenues and recorded to ensure we are attuned to children's ongoing growth and development. Quality documentation is based on its significance as opposed to its presentation. The recording of a meaningful conversation using dot points, is just as important as an anecdotal observation with a range of photos.

Analysing Learning:

Once data has been collected, educators provide a professional analysis of the child's development observed and/or discussed within the data. These assessments provide a deeper understanding of the child and their learning at that point in time. Interpreting children's learning requires educators to utilise their professional knowledge and theoretical perspectives to assess the data and highlight its significance.

When analysing data, educators are exploring:

- A child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs
- Issues that may be impacting a child and their wellbeing
- Links to previous observations
- Short and long-term development
- Moments of growth and success
- Areas of concern
- Links to the Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes

Planning:

High quality learning opportunities require intention and consideration. Whilst many positive outcomes evolve from spontaneous experiences, purposeful learning programs are based on intentional teaching moments that are planned based on data that has been collected and analysed. By establishing clear objectives and relevant teaching strategies, educators are prepared to offer meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for children.

At Kids' Uni, educators use relevant findings within their analysis of learning to forward plan. When planning for children, educators acknowledge:

- Respectful relationships with children are paramount
- Children develop and learn in their own unique way
- Children learn through authentic play experiences
- Programs include a mix of child-led, educator-guided and educator-led experiences
- High quality teaching is thoughtful and intentional
- Learning alongside children requires educators to be present and responsive
- Educators are reflexive in their practice
- A range of teaching strategies are required to ensure individual needs are met
- The learning environment is viewed as a third teacher
- Cultural safety is paramount to developing a secure learning environment

Depending on the child, their learning style and objective, each plan will be organised by the primary educator in the most relevant way. However, in order to create clear documentation and intentional teaching moments, educators include:

- A learning objective
- Specific teaching strategies that outline their role as the educator
- Appropriate environment adaptations and considerations

Other important considerations when planning are:

- Resources required
- Early Years Learning Framework Practices, Principles and Learning Outcomes
- Relevant dispositions for learning
- Cultural considerations
- Children's voices
- The overall context of the child
- The role of the environment in the learning

When a plan is created, it is placed onto the Planning Wall as evidence of the educator's planned intentions. Creating a clear plan with objectives and strategies, ensures that implementation is considered and responsive. Additionally, planned learning opportunities are evident for families and can continue to be provided should educators take leave, thus creating a consistent learning environment for children.

Implementing:

Implementing meaningful learning experiences requires educators to utilise various teaching strategies and resources to meet the needs of the child. By including learning objectives and teaching strategies within the planning phase, educators are supported to be intentional and responsive during the implementation phase.

When implementing intentional teaching strategies and/or planned experiences for children, we acknowledge that:

- Play is a voluntary experience for children
- The child may lead the learning experience in different directions requiring the educator to be responsive and flexible
- Prepared and considered environments facilitate multiple learning opportunities
- Observation and data collection throughout the implementation phase is crucial to support reflective practice and forward planning
- Educators follow a child's interests to create intrinsic motivation
- Creating achievable learning outcomes supports positive dispositions for learning
- Planning and documentation is crucial for evidencing our work

The implementation phase is individualised for each child and is based on their needs and development. As educators plan for learning objectives through recording relevant teaching strategies and environmental considerations, we embed a balance between child-led and intentional teaching.

In practice this means:

- Every interaction with a child is viewed as a learning opportunity
- Children enter a planned experience voluntarily
- Children's autonomy will be respected as educators follow a child's lead
- Educators are responsive to children's interests, strengths and abilities by adapting learning opportunities and experiences as required
- Educators utilise a continuum of teaching strategies to ensure practice is responsive to children's learning and behaviour
- Environments are organised, inviting and well-resourced to ensure children have autonomy within all learning spaces
- Educators observe children throughout the implementation phase to ensure learning and development is witnessed and documented for reflection and further planning
- Any change in children's needs or interests is responded to and documented to evidence decisions made in future planning cycles
- Opportunities for children to clarify data are offered to encourage rigor and include the voice of the child

These implementation strategies allow educators to be intentional about their practice, whilst being responsive to children's needs. Additionally, through supporting educators to embed a range of teaching strategies within their practice, they can continually adapt their pedagogy to meet their planned objectives. The first five years of life includes rapid periods of growth. Whilst educators plan with clear learning objectives and teaching strategies we know that change is common and at times, happens very quickly. What is most important is that we acknowledge and evidence this process in order to reflect and create relevant learning opportunities.

Reflecting and Evaluating:

Reflection is paramount when creating responsive and individualised learning opportunities. Additionally, this phase provides educators with the opportunity to consider their practice, to celebrate moments of success, and to identify areas that require further support and exploration.

When considering reflection we acknowledge that:

- Reflection is viewing our past interactions with children using a critical lens
- Evaluation is a key element of continual improvement of practice
- Multiple pieces of data are collected within the implementation phase to create a holistic view of the child's response to planned learning objectives
- Educators consider the appropriateness of their learning objectives and teaching strategies
- Reflections include critical evaluations of our role as the educator and the role of the environment
- Integrating the voice of the child through our reflections, ensures we understand their needs and opinions

Once a planned learning objective has been implemented, the educator moves into the reflection phase in which they critically reflect on data collected within the implementation phase. Content within each reflection will be relevant to the specific child and the learning objective created by that educator. In practice this means:

- Each planned learning objective is followed by a detailed reflection
- Reflections are timely to allow for authenticity
- Reflections include examples or an evaluation of data collected throughout the implementation phase
- An analysis of learning is conducted and included
- Educators document their role through an evaluation of their chosen teaching strategies
- Unexpected change is documented through linking and evaluating relevant data
- Educators include a brief summary of their intentions for the next planning cycle
- Educators reference relevant theories, practices and/or the Early Years Learning Framework to support their decision-making process
- If appropriate, educators discuss their reflection with the child to obtain their feedback and opinion
- Reflections are shared with families on Kinderloop

The planning cycle continues as educators use analysed data evidenced within the reflection to create a new learning objective to be placed on the Planning Wall. Through providing an in-depth reflection, educators can create learning objectives that are relevant for children. High quality practice is driven by consistent and critical reflection. Through reflecting on our practice and environments, we can ensure children's learning remains meaningful as we continually adapt and build upon our role as the educator.

Group Planning

High quality early learning includes the planning for and implementation of group learning. When considered and intentional, learning in groups can be a collaborative process that creates a rich sense of belonging. Children are able to share and listen to various perspectives when supported to learn alongside their peers. Creating a shared understanding during decision-making processes allows children to utilise their voice and take ownership of matters that affect them. In order to create rich group experiences we acknowledge that:

- Planning for group learning is a crucial part of our role
- Critical reflection informs our decision making
- Group planning follows the same cycle as individual planning
- Decisions surrounding group experiences and environments are evidenced through clear documentation
- Children's voices, interests and skills drive group planning decisions
- Routines and transitions are key moments when children move together as a group
- Family input and knowledge is welcomed and included within group planning

Within each service and learning environment, the group planning process evolves into a cycle that is unique and contextualised to the needs of the children within that space. As such, group planning documentation is collected, created and presented in diverse ways. However, at Kids' Uni we have a shared understanding that in practice:

- Group learning is consistently planned for
- Decisions around group planning is informed by critical reflection from all educators within that space
- Group planning follows the planning cycle
- Documentation is clear and accessible for children, educators and families
- Routines and transitions are planned, reflected upon and adapted as required
- Children are included within the planning process through open communication and data collected from the educator's interactions and observations
- Group planning documentation is accessible for families to read and share their thoughts and ideas

Having a sense of belonging strengthens a child's ability to learn and develop. Rich and intentional planning, allows for meaningful group learning. As children learn alongside their peers, they develop their understanding of multiple perspectives whilst being respected for their own ideas and interpretations of the world around them.

Assessment of Learning

Assessing children's learning is a crucial component of early education. We acknowledge that all children will grow and develop in their own unique way. However, it is important that we are consistently assessing children's development to ensure we are meeting their needs, providing beneficial learning opportunities and identifying areas in which children require additional support. When assessing children's learning we believe:

- Children express their knowledge and understanding in various ways
- Various forms of assessment are required to meet the diverse needs of all children
- Developmental milestones act as a guide when assessing children's learning
- A child is a unique human being with their own strengths and abilities
- Positive dispositions for learning are crucial for children's lifelong learning
- Data within previous assessments is consistently embedded within a child's planning cycle
- Children are active participants within assessment processes
- Families have access to add to their child's learning assessments

At Kids' Uni we are assessing children's learning with each and every interaction we have.

As we value strong relationships between children and educators, each child has the opportunity to share their skills and knowledge in their own unique way. We assess and evidence children's learning through:

- Individual and group planning cycles
- Half-Yearly Summative Assessments
- End of Year Summative Assessments
- Transition to School Statements

By using these various forms of assessment strategies, educators are able to critically reflect on children's growth whilst developing the child's awareness and involvement within their own learning journey.

Reflective Practice

Processes of critical reflection are paramount to providing high quality early education and care. Our practice is ever evolving in response to the needs of children and current research. Through creating meaningful moments of critical reflection, we are able to adapt our practice by considering multiple perspectives. At Kids' Uni, we embed many opportunities for educators to reflect as an individual, an educator and a colleague. We acknowledge that individuals process and share information differently and therefore we create various modes in which educators can interact with and reflect on practice, ideas and theories.

When creating opportunities for meaningful reflective practice we believe:

- Reflective practice is foundational for continuous improvement
- Critical reflection is a process which brings together multiple perspectives and changes our practice
- Reflective practice encourages the development of inclusive environments
- The needs of children are best met through consistent reflection
- All educators have the right to respectfully share their thoughts and ideas
- Creating moments to reflect as a team strengthens our understanding of children, families and each other
- Considering multiple perspectives further develops our professional knowledge
- Theory and current research underpins moments of critical reflection

- Children's voices are a valuable and key component of reflective practice
- Families are a child's first teacher and their voice is a critical inclusion within reflective practice

At Kids Uni these beliefs are embedded within our reflective practice in the following ways:

- Individual learning plans
- Room reflections and group planning
- Monthly meetings
- Professional readings
- Professional Development Days
- Learning Development Plans
- Educational Leader Meetings
- Leadership and Management Meetings

Reflective practice plays a large part of our role as educators. We value critical reflection by providing time for educators to pause, consider and evaluate their practice. We seek voices from others to critically reflect on areas we wish to adapt or improve. Through documenting these moments, we are guided to continually improve and evidence the extensive work our educators do in order to further develop their pedagogical practice.

Children's Voices

Educator – “What do you like to learn about?”

Hailey – "How does the tree grow leaves?"

Curriculum Content

As adapted from Te Whariki and embedded within the Early Years Learning Framework, curriculum is defined as:

‘All interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment to foster children’s learning and development.’ (2022, p.65).

Within the early years, children begin to form their understanding of various concepts and ideas. In 2018, UNICEF stated, ‘Play is one of the most important ways in which young children gain essential knowledge and skills.’ As this statement is supported by numerous other research papers and theorists, we ensure that content within our curriculum is embedded within a range of play experiences. Play can often be viewed as an insignificant activity. However, Stephen Porges (2019) defines play as an important ‘neural activity’ in which children build crucial networks within the brain. As such, we believe that developing children’s love for learning, is best achieved using a play-based approach.

Dispositions for Learning

At Kids’ Uni, we place great value on the development of children’s learning dispositions. As stated by Carr, dispositions are ‘enduring habits of mind and actions and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations.’ (ELYF V.1, 2001). We believe encouraging positive dispositions for learning will foster a love for lifelong learning. More importantly, through scaffolding these dispositions, children will see themselves as confident learners. At Kids’ Uni we strive to foster learning dispositions such as:

- Curiosity
- Cooperation
- Confidence
- Creativity
- Commitment
- Enthusiasm
- Persistence
- Imagination
- Reflexivity

Through fostering the development of these learning dispositions, children are supported to develop valuable skills that will serve them in their future lifelong learning.

Curriculum Content Areas

At Kids' Uni we ensure that key curriculum areas are embedded within our programming and practice. Through using play and moments of caregiving, educators intentionally build upon children's knowledge and understanding of a range of educational concepts. These concepts are organised into the following content areas:

- Family, Community and Culture
- Health and Wellbeing
- Language and Literacy
- Creativity and Self-Expression
- STEM
- Natural Environments and Sustainability

Family, Community and Culture

We believe that children have the right to develop a sense of belonging within their own world. We welcome and continue to learn about the diverse cultures and backgrounds that form who children are and where they have come from. We foster a child's understanding of family, community and culture through providing learning opportunities that focus on:

- The rich culture and history of our Nation's First People
- Acknowledging and paying respect to the land of the local Aboriginal People
- Maintaining and valuing respectful relationships with local Aboriginal Elders
- Appreciating and understanding each child's individual context and culture
- Creating a sense of belonging within the Kids' Uni environments
- Valuing the knowledge and wisdom within all family groups
- Exploring the diverse cultures within our community
- Celebrating the diverse cultures around the world
- Supporting children to be valued members of their community
- Celebrating diverse family structures
- Researching the similarities and differences between various cultures
- Sharing and respecting different ideas and opinions
- Maintaining respectful communication across cultures
- Highlighting and meeting the needs and rights of others
- Strengthening connections to the community around us
- Sharing information about themselves and what makes them unique
- Using home languages

Family, Community, and Culture supports:

- Principle: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives
- Practice: Cultural Responsiveness
- Learning Outcome 1: Children have a sense of identity

Health and Wellbeing

As children grow and gain their independence, it is crucial that they are provided with the support to create and maintain a positive sense of self. Health and wellbeing encapsulates how children feel and view themselves emotionally, physically and mentally. The early years are a crucial moment in time in which we encourage healthful habits that form a strong foundation for children to build upon for many years to come. At Kids' Uni, we value and teach these concepts through providing learning opportunities that focus on:

- Building and maintaining secure attachments with others
- Identification and communication of needs for comfort and/or assistance
- Development of self-regulation through co-regulation
- Encouraging and embedding children's voices
- Development of self-help skills such as feeding, dressing and toileting
- Awareness and identification of emotions
- Development of strong fine and gross motor movements
- Exploration of individual interests and skills
- Development of prosocial behaviours
- Exploring how our behaviour can impact others
- Sharing one's own opinion and thoughts in a respectful manner
- Development of empathy and compassion for others
- Building core strength, coordination and stamina
- Developing strategies to calm our bodies and our mind
- Empowering children to ask for and provide consent
- Developing awareness of safe and unsafe touch
- Choosing foods that offer our bodies energy and nourishment
- Development of mindfulness and relaxation techniques and strategies
- Identifying when our bodies need rest
- Developing persistence in times of challenge
- Assessing and taking risks
- Identification and communication of illness and/or pain
- Connection to nature and the outdoor environments
- Strategies to identify and manage moments of stress
- Celebrating moments of success
- Creating moments of joy and happiness

Health and Wellbeing supports:

- Principle: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Practice: Responsiveness to children
- Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Language and Literacy

At Kids' Uni we believe the exposure to and interaction of language and literacy starts at birth. Language is a way to connect with others in order to share and learn about ourselves and those around us. Literacy is more than learning to read and write. It involves the interpretation and enjoyment of images, symbols, stories and messages. In the early years, language and literacy learning is best shared through play and moments of caregiving. At Kids' Uni we support this development through creating learning moments that focus on:

- Development of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Using language purposefully to support reciprocal relationships
- Using home and family literacies as the foundation to build from
- Exposing children to language rich environments
- Identifying and exploring input from all five senses
- Exploring literary roles through play
- Developing receptive and expressive language skills
- Identifying sounds and patterns within speech
- Using language to contribute to play experiences
- Critically reflecting on the use and purpose of a range of texts
- Studying imagery for meaning and ideas
- Awareness of letters and their purpose
- Embedding opportunities to write in various play spaces and experiences
- Sharing and listening to ideas with others
- Identifying our name and other meaningful words or symbols
- Embedding literacy within open-ended play experiences
- Interacting with various print, visual and multimedia texts
- Utilising technology to share literacy and language in an intentional and meaningful way
- Development of directionality of texts
- Interacting with technology to experiment, edit and create documents
- Exploring difficult concepts through storytelling and sharing relevant books
- Creating quiet areas to enjoy and interact with books
- Making connections between texts and real-life experiences
- Using mark making and written symbols as a form of communication
- Exploring phonics and pre-literacy skills

Language and Literacy supports:

- Principle: Partnerships
- Practice: Learning environments
- Learning Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Creativity and Self-Expression

Children express their ideas and understanding of the world in diverse ways. At Kids' Uni, we believe that children have the right to access a range of creative mediums to encourage their creativity and self-expression. Additionally, mediums such as music, drama and role play, are critical in allowing children to explore and express their emotions and understanding of various concepts. Providing opportunities to wonder, imagine and experiment are the fundamentals of early learning. These moments instil positive dispositions for learning as children are able to problem solve, take risks and explore the world at their own pace. We support creativity and self-expression through offering learning experiences that focus on:

- Developing autonomy over their creative play
- Exploring self-identity through various creative mediums
- Developing spatial awareness using multiple mark-making tools
- Utilising creative mediums to express emotions and ideas
- Building positive identities as an artist
- Appreciating different skills and abilities within the creative art space
- Exploring real life concepts through dramatic role play
- Experiencing various perspectives through pretend play
- Expressing opinions and ideas in a respectful way
- Developing healthy modes of sensory input and output
- Negotiating play with peers and educators
- Investigating new ideas
- Choosing music and songs that are purposeful
- Exploring and experimenting with a range of musical instruments
- Highlighting various elements of music such as tempo, volume, rhythm, pitch and melody
- Experimenting with composition of music and sound making
- Exploring creative arts from diverse cultures
- Encouraging a range of complex sensory-motor skills
- Transference of knowledge across settings
- Providing children with moments of mindfulness and calm
- Extending proprioception through whole body movement
- Exploring concepts such as colour, shape, pattern and texture
- Explore and begin to develop an appreciation of creative arts from various cultures

Creativity and Self-Expression supports:

- Principle: Equity, inclusion and high expectations
- Practice: Play-based learning and intentionality
- Learning Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – STEM

Curiosity and imagination are two crucial dispositions for learning. At Kids' Uni we believe we nourish and strengthen these through embedding a range of STEM concepts in our everyday interactions with children. Additionally, we provide engaging learning environments and intentional teaching moments to build a child's fundamental understanding of how science and technology impacts our world. We integrate early numeracy in meaningful ways to build a child's confidence in their mathematical abilities. Concepts within STEM are critical for everyday life. We explore these concepts through offering learning experiences that focus on:

- Developing strong problem solving skills
- Encouraging moments of inquiry and experimentation
- Exploring cause and effect
- Formulating processes of inquiry
- Understanding and exploring mathematical concepts and ideas
- Breaking down the process to foster executive functioning skills
- Embedding concepts of time
- Supporting the identification of basic shapes and colours
- Identifying and representing basic numbers
- Engineering our own creations to explore concepts such as weight, height and mass
- Providing a range of resources to foster three-dimensional thinking
- Developing skills in hypothesising, predicting and analysing
- Experimenting with different types of technology
- Using technology to research and record information and ideas
- Exploring fundamental concepts of engineering such as design, planning and creating
- Fostering empathy to understand another's way of thinking
- Embedding early numeracy skills such as counting, numeral recognition and pattern
- Experimenting with diverse natural and man-made resources
- Supporting risk assessment
- Making comparisons between items and processes
- Challenging thoughts and ideas
- Transference of knowledge across different contexts
- Encouraging reflection to build skills for future play

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics supports:

- Principle: Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning
- Practice: Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing
- Learning Outcome 4: Children are confident learners

Natural Environments and Sustainability

Caring for country is a key component of our philosophical beliefs and pedagogical practice. Instilling a love for and dedication to our natural environments is of high importance at Kids' Uni. We also acknowledge that sustainability includes environmental, social and economic elements which are all connected and impact one another. Connection to nature is integral for children's sense of health and wellbeing. Additionally, the land and country around us provide rich and meaningful learning opportunities. We role model and guide children to have a respectful relationship with country. Through engaging with and learning from local Aboriginal Elders, we can listen to and learn from expert knowledge from the Custodians of this land. We encourage children's understanding of sustainability and nature through offering learning experiences that focus on:

- Sharing the unique characteristics of country in our local area
- Listening to and respecting the messages Country sends us
- Using UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals to support children's awareness of the interconnectedness of our world
- Role modelling sustainable practices such as reduce, reuse and recycle
- Appreciating and caring for natural environments
- Providing children with consistent opportunities to explore natural environments
- Respecting and caring for living things
- Understanding the human impact on our environment
- Exploring relationships between all living things
- Understanding the cycle of life
- Supporting children's wellbeing through exposing children to natural learning, environments, and resources
- Investigate the inner workings of living things
- Supporting children's sensory development through interacting with natural environments
- Fostering wonder of the natural environment
- Exploring natural wonders from around the world
- Investigating diverse living animals and plants
- Recalibrating our nervous systems through connecting with the natural environment
- Using natural resources for exploration, discovery and appreciation
- Problem solving to discover ways in which we can preserve natural resources
- Strengthening gross and fine motor skills through exploring nature in our wider community
- Developing independence through caring for the environment

Sustainability and Nature supports:

- Principle: Sustainability
- Practice: Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches
- Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Inclusive Practice

At Kids' Uni we believe all children are entitled to quality early education and care. In order to create a rich sense of belonging, we critically reflect on our practice and strive to provide inclusive environments and experiences that meet the needs of all children and families. Through including various cultures, ideas and opinions within our practice and curriculum, we can share and better understand the experience of others.

Aboriginal Perspectives

At Kids' Uni we believe that by embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in all aspects of our practice and pedagogy, we can enhance children's learning and development. First Nations' culture is rich in history and wisdom. At Kids' Uni we believe that it is our role to include this history within our curriculum. Moreover, it is our role to connect with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and experts to understand and embed their knowledge on how children learn and develop. First Nations' people have extensive expertise in their land and the lessons it can teach us about the relationships we have with ourselves and each other.

At Kids' Uni, we believe through connecting with and listening to local elders and experts, we can strengthen our practice through understanding and embedding their perspectives on early education and care. These goals require continuous reflection and effort to ensure we share Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history accurately and respectfully. In practice this means:

- Each service works towards creating and maintaining meaningful relationships with Local Elders
- First Nations' knowledge and perspectives are used to inform curriculum decisions
- Relevant protocols are followed when embedding local knowledge within our curriculum
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are embedded within curriculum planning and development
- Reflective practice is utilised to ensure our programs and practices are culturally safe and appropriate
- Each service reflects on how the practices, principles and outcomes within the EYLF document relates to learning and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history

Children's Voices

Educator – "What should your teacher be good at?"

Jude – "Making me feel safe"

Voice of the Child

The voice of the child is one that carries great significance. As stated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

“Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.”

At Kids’ Uni we advocate for a child’s right to a voice. Additionally, we see the voice of the child as a valuable source of information to develop a strong sense of who they are and what is important to them. As such, through embedding the voice of the child in our practice and curriculum, we are better able to provide relevant and meaningful learning opportunities. To view the world from a child’s perspective is a privilege. Educators consistently reflect on how we can include children in decision making to support their sense of belonging and confidence in communicating their thoughts and opinions in a positive way. In practice we include the voice of the child by:

- Collaborating with children on group research ideas
- Inclusion of children's voices within their assessment of learning
- Using questioning as a regular teaching strategy to encourage children’s voice
- Ensuring all curriculum decisions are based on children’s interests, needs and skills
- Communicating with children in a respectful and safe manner
- Using technology to provide children with opportunities to capture the learning environment from their perspective
- Verifying our understanding of children’s ideas and opinions through relaying our interpretations with them
- Inclusion of children’s ideas throughout the development of relevant policies and procedures
- Creating opportunities for children to influence events, environments and relationships within the broader community.

At Kids’ Uni we continue to reflect on how we can uphold all relevant Articles within the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. We believe that children are not only the future, they are the present. We strive to ensure that their current needs are met to create positive learning experiences in the here and now. We believe that by actively listening to and acting on the messages children communicate to us, is a foundational part of our role as early childhood educators and advocates.

Inclusion of Families

Families are a child’s first teacher. The knowledge that parents and carers hold surrounding their child cannot be underestimated. At Kids’ Uni, we believe that the inclusion of this knowledge is paramount in providing a safe and consistent learning environment for children. Additionally, a review of relevant educational research found that strong communication and collaboration between parents and educators resulted in significant benefits for children’s social development and mental health outcomes (Sheridan et al, 2019).

We value our relationships with families and provide various ways in which their knowledge and ideas can inform our curriculum. In practice this is achieved by:

- Implementing a meaningful enrolment and orientation process
- Utilising family partnership forms to inform planning
- Annual philosophy reviews for families to share their ideas
- Communicating planning cycles through Kinderloop for family engagement
- Providing families with regular updates on curriculum learning objectives
- Inclusion of family perspectives within assessment of learning
- Consistent communication with families during drop-off and pick-up
- Utilising family communication to inform children's planning cycles
- Sharing and exchanging information and perspectives through parent forums
- Inviting families to be active members of our Reconciliation Action Plan Committee

Our relationships with children are richer when family's knowledge and understanding are embedded within our pedagogy and curriculum. When children observe strong relationships between educators and families their sense of safety and belonging is strengthened. Through including family knowledge, planned learning objectives and experiences hold greater significance for children.

Children's Voices

Educator – "What do you like to learn about?"

Tom – "I like to learn drawing"

Pedagogical Practice

Across our educational curriculum, we embed multiple theories and teaching strategies that underpin our philosophical beliefs on how children learn. We consistently reflect on a range of factors that impact how we plan and implement learning for children.

The Continuum of Teaching Strategies

As stated within the EYLF (2022) "Play-based learning with intentionality can expand children's thinking and enhance their desire to know and to learn" (p.21). Additionally as Johnson, Wardle and Christie (2005) found, when adults are involved in children's play, it lasts longer and is more detailed and elaborate. Therefore, consistently reflecting on our role as the educator within play-based learning is crucial to ensure we embed a range of teaching strategies to provide rich experiences for children.

Educators acknowledge one teaching strategy is not necessarily more effective than another. Rather, each individual learning opportunity requires a strategy that is best suited to that particular teaching moment and child. Additionally, there are many moments where educators will use a range of strategies simultaneously.

At Kids' Uni, educators are guided by a range of teaching strategies that have been organised into the following three different categories:

- Child directed – children are involved in open-ended play experiences in which they direct their own play and learning as an individual or within a group.
- Educator guided - educators work alongside children and offer intentional support or scaffolding.
- Educator directed – educators provide explicit guidance for children.

Included below is an outline of the key pedagogical practices and beliefs that we draw on at Kids Uni in our teaching practices. We believe that it is important for us to be able to articulate the strategies that are important to us and how they impact children's learning.

The Environment as a Third Teacher

Theories that underpin the Reggio Emilia approach acknowledge that the environment in which children learn, acts as a third teacher. Additionally, ACECQA (2018) states that, by being intentional with how we plan our environments we "invite children to delve deeper, investigate and represent their learning through a range of mediums." Therefore, how we plan and present our environments is crucial to children's growth and development. At Kids' Uni we acknowledge that:

- Our respect for children is evidenced within the environments we plan and provide for them
- Environments impact children's behaviour
- Well-resourced environments allow for autonomy

- Flexible environments promote diverse learning opportunities for children
- Environments create a sense of belonging allowing children to feel safe and secure, priming their brains for learning
- The provision of high quality resources encourages enjoyable experiences
- Heuristic resources (ie. resources that enable a child to learn or discover something for themselves) promote creativity and allow for children to direct their own learning
- Inclusive environments support and facilitate for diverse needs and learning styles
- Organised and calm spaces support children's ability to process sensory information

How we present our environments to children greatly impacts their learning and behaviour. Our physical, emotional and cognitive environments are developed with intentionality. In practice this means:

- Educators consistently reflect on the environment's functionality and aesthetics through room meetings and discussions
- Environments are well organised and free from clutter
- A range of learning spaces are provided to meet diverse needs and interests
- The environment is recognised as an important consideration when developing learning plans
- Educators reset environments throughout the day to ensure play areas are inviting and send messages that the spaces and equipment is respected.
- Environments are accessible for all children and families
- Cultural perspectives of children and families are considered and included within the learning environments
- Resources are of good quality and fully functional
- Children are offered a range of resources allowing for creativity and child and teacher directed play
- A range of resources are available and accessible for children to obtain independently
- Educators liaise with external agencies and support persons to provide consistent and inclusive environments for children with disabilities.

A well-planned learning environment acts as a conduit for children and their learning. Through planning and providing a range of rich and engaging spaces, educators are able to facilitate individualised and responsive learning opportunities for all children.

Care as curriculum

At Kids' Uni we believe every interaction we have with children is a learning opportunity. Through building strong attachments and embedding relevant curriculum content within all moments of the day, children can develop positive dispositions for learning in a meaningful way. In particular, we believe that for infants and toddlers, a large proportion of learning occurs in moments of care and this is planned for accordingly. Care and education are inextricably linked and we acknowledge that:

- Children have the right to be active participants in their learning
- Children are viewed as equals
- Children are kept informed throughout moments of care and education, that is, we do things with children, not to them
- Children begin their learning journey at birth
- Learning occurs in all interactions with children

- Children need to feel safe and secure in order to learn
- Routines and transitions provide many learning opportunities
- Care and education are of equal importance for young children
- Moments of care provide for experiential learning (ie. opportunities to learn through experience)
- Routines create a sense of predictability and consistency. A collaborative team creates consistent and predictable care environments for children
- Relationships with families are paramount to meeting the individual needs of each child

As the first few years of life are critical for optimal brain development, we place great value and focus on moments of care for children and their families. We believe all moments of the day are learning opportunities that require respectful planning and reflection. In practice this means:

- Children's voices are included when developing daily routines
- Children are provided with a key educator to support their sense of safety and belonging within the environment and staffing rosters are designed to create continuity of care.
- Children's sense of safety and security are met through responsive observation and caregiving
- Educators speak to children using respectful language
- Educators inform children of their actions during routines such as nappy change and toileting
- Children's learning is valued through planning and providing meaningful learning objectives for all ages
- Routines and transitions are valued by being included within a child's and/or room's planning documentation
- Educators support children's learning within moments of transition through respectful communication
- Educators communicate and collaborate with each other using Kinderloop, staff meetings, informal conversations, room meetings and meetings with the Educational Leader and support teachers to provide consistent learning opportunities for all children
- A family's knowledge of their child is valued and captured through Partnership Forms, Kinderloop and daily interactions.

When we care for children in a responsive and meaningful way, we can provide a learning environment that is safe and secure. Through being respectful of children and their needs, they feel valued whilst learning to show care and respect to others. When we plan and reflect in a meaningful way, moments of care are rich learning opportunities.

Children's Voices

Educator – "What should your teacher be good at?"

Jaxon – "Goodbye hugs"

Grouping of children

Coming together as a group can support a sense of community within a learning space. When planned with purpose, children can share with and learn from their peers in a group experience. At Kids' Uni, we value these moments and place great focus on ensuring that these teaching moments are beneficial and meaningful for children who participate. When grouping children we believe that:

- Educators will incorporate children's interests and ideas to make group experiences enticing and engaging for all children, however we do not force a child to participate in a group experience (unless there is a safety risk to the child/ren).
- Group experiences are well planned and documented
- Young children are still developing their capacity to participate in groups for extended periods of time
- In the early years, children learn best in small groups or 1:1 with educators
- Children have the right to contribute their ideas and opinions
- Positive group experiences foster a sense of belonging and community
- Working within a well-supported group fosters team work and cooperation
- Group experiences allow for the introduction of new concepts and ideas
- Group work supports the development of active listening, concentration and prosocial skills

Educators consistently reflect on when and how to group children in a meaningful and appropriate manner. In practice this means:

- Educators provide clear communication to children surrounding the purpose of the group experience
- Group experiences are planned from children's interests and/or needs
- Length of groups are tailored to the developmental stage of the children within the group
- Size of groups will remain manageable to allow for greater participation and focus, and to cater for individual needs
- Children are supported to share their ideas in a respectful way
- Groups remain a safe space for children to be open and honest
- Educators use a range of teaching strategies to create interesting and meaningful group experiences
- Children remain active participants within the group
- Content is age appropriate and relevant

Throughout the day, each service provides a range of group experiences. These include:

- Daily Reconciliation Commitment – children come together with educators to pay their respects to the land on which we meet, and pay respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders
- Meal times – roving meal times allow for children to eat and interact with a small group of peers, while educators can cater to individual needs and maintain respectful and enjoyable meal experiences.
- Small group experiences – various planned and spontaneous small group experiences occur throughout the day. These include experiences such as investigations, sharing stories, dancing, and making music
- Large group experiences – teacher-directed experiences are required at certain times. Examples of these include sharing information around health and safety such as fire drills, sharing information about routines or environments, taking time to re-group and calm children, and learning about safe behaviours.

Digital Technology

The rise of digital technology in recent times has been swift, holding various implications for children's learning and our practice. When utilised in an intentional and considered way, we value the benefits of digital technology within our learning environments. Our relationship with digital technology is complex and should be based on the individual needs of children and families. As stated within the ECA Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies, it is beneficial for services to work towards a contextual approach that recognises 'educators are skilled at working in partnership with children and families in the best interests of the child' (2018, p. 4).

As children grow and develop in a digital world, it is important for educators to role model and allow interactions with technology in a safe and purposeful manner. At Kids' Uni we have a shared understanding that:

- Digital technology does not replace the importance of developing strong attachments with children
- Digital technology does not replace the need for sustained social interactions
- When used appropriately, digital technology can enhance children's learning
- Families are kept informed about the use of digital technology
- Rich learning environments provide digital and non-digital resources
- Use of digital technology is intentional
- Children need to be guided to use digital technology safely in the early years
- Any learning resource accessed via digital technology is safe and appropriate
- Educators utilise digital technology to support communication with families
- Educators share information and support families to develop positive digital technology habits
- Digital technology can support connections with the wider community
- Educators maintain strict supervision and support as children interact with digital technology
- Children's skills and interests in expressing themselves through digital technology is supported by educators
- As required, digital technology is utilised as communicative tool for people with disabilities

Children's Voices

Educator – "What should you teacher be good at?"

Danny – "Sitting and having lunch with me."

Support Documentation

Critical Reflection Questions Guide - for Educators

What happened:

- What is your interpretation of this experience?
- How were dispositions for learning explored?
- Significant achievements
- Level of engagement
- Unexpected experiences
- Did the child benefit from this experience?

Environment:

- Did it hinder/support learning?
- Was it well resourced?
- Did it encourage autonomy?
- What messages did it send to the child?
- Did the space create sensory overload?

Additional considerations:

- Was the experience culturally safe?
- Did the experience include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives?
- Was the experience inclusive?
- Was the experience sufficiently challenging?
- Did the experience include family involvement?
- Is further support required for this child and/or their family?
- What theories underpinned this experience?

Forward planning:

- Will I continue with this cycle?
- How might I do things differently?
- What else do I want to know?
- How can I include the voice of the child?

- How can I include the family?
- What cultural considerations do I need to include?
- How can I build this child's skills and interests?
- How can I acknowledge, respect and value children's diverse identities?

Self-reflection:

- What did I learn?
- How did my own knowledge and understanding influence this experience?
- How did my teaching strategies influence the experience?
- Did my personal beliefs, values or possible biases impact on the experience?
- What theories and philosophies shape my work?
- How can I include different viewpoints to identify any blind spots in my practice?
- What do I need to learn more about?
- Was I challenged or confronted by anything?
- How can I use various forms of assessment to gain a solid understanding of the child?

Room reflection:

- What does everyone think?
- Why do we think like that?
- Is it working for us?
- Where do we go from here?
- Does this align with our philosophy?
- What do we want to achieve?
- How do we provide a curriculum that supports children's varying diverse needs, learning styles and interests?
- How can we work together to achieve our goals?
- How can we share our curriculum with families?
- How can we communicate more effectively?
- How can we evidence our work?

Continuum of Teaching Strategies

Child directed	Educator guided	Educator directed
Acknowledging Facilitating Encouraging Listening Modeling Providing for choice	Reflecting Challenging Co-construction Collaboration Identifying Interacting Imagining Negotiating Making connections Questioning Scaffolding Researching Revisiting Wondering	Demonstration Explaining Explicit instruction Introducing

Child directed

+ Acknowledging

When educators take notice and comment on a child, they are acknowledging. Meaningful acknowledgements offer clear and specific information. For example, educators can acknowledge a child's developing self-regulation by saying "I can see you taking slow, deep breaths to calm your body." Acknowledging can reassure children as educators remain connected through stating what they are observing.

+ Facilitating

Educators facilitate through creating environments and opportunities that promote learning. This occurs when we set up environments that are welcoming, age appropriate and offer children choice, making learning easier. Educators can also facilitate learning through providing specific resources to support their current learning objectives for children.

+ Encouraging

When educators provide children with meaningful support, we can encourage them to persist with something they are unsure of. By highlighting children's current strengths, educators can provide children with the confidence to take risks.

+ Listening

When we sit and actively listen to children's language, both verbal and non-verbal, we can gain an understanding of the messages they are trying to give us and those around them. Those messages can include their interests, what is important to them and if they need further support and connection. When listened to, children have amazing contributions to make to their world.

+ Modelling

As children learn through observing others, behaviours such as curiosity, reflection, co-operation and problem solving can be instilled in children when educators intentionally model them throughout the day.

+ Providing for choice

This strategy allows for and encourages autonomy and independence for children. We provide choice by offering a range of learning opportunities within the environment and across the day. Additionally, we provide for choice when we embed the voice of the child in our decision making. Through giving children choice we are giving them control in a world where many decisions are made for them.

Educator guided

+ Reflecting

Reflective practice is a vital tool that can also include children. Through including children in reflective moments, we build upon their skills to be critical thinkers whilst obtaining their thoughts and perspectives for forward planning. Reflecting encourages problem solving skills as we sit with children to discuss why certain things happened and what can be done differently next time. To support moments of reflection we can look through photos and recorded conversations or interactions alongside the child.

+ Challenging

By developing strong connections with children, we have an understanding of when they are ready to be challenged to extend their skills and interests. Educators can do this through posing questions, providing opportunities for problem solving or offering alternative resources and/or points of view.

+ Co-construction

When we work together with children to investigate, experiment, question and explore new ideas we co-construct our knowledge. This strategy teaches children that we are always learning and that they can support educators in their learning too.

+ Collaboration

This strategy allows children to take an equal part of a planning process. When we collaborate, we work together with children and trust their expertise in knowing what works for them. Being mindful of offering all children an opportunity to share ideas, teaches children that we all have valid and differing points of view.

+ Identifying

When educators identify, we are drawing a child's attention to something that may extend their understanding or interests. This can create new avenues of investigation by presenting a different perspective.

+ Interacting

As children learn through socialisation, simple interactions between children and educators further support a range of developmental areas in an individualised way.

+ Imagining

Through creating environments that encourage exploration and experimentation, we provide children with the opportunities to imagine, be creative and explore new concepts through open-ended play experiences.

+ Negotiating

By providing children with opportunities to solve problems and disagreements, we can encourage skills in negotiation. Educators support these interactions through presenting differing views of an issue and scaffold the process of creating a positive solution.

+ Making connections

Through comparing and contrasting, educators can support children to make connections by seeing how certain concepts or ideas relate or differ. This strategy supports the development of cause and effect, process and procedure.

+ Questioning

Through asking open-ended questions educators can provide children with the opportunity to reflect and express their ideas and thoughts. Respectful questions can also provide educators with a better understanding of the child's interests and opinions.

+ Scaffolding

When educators have a solid understanding of a child, they are able to extend an experience or idea to further develop their skills and understanding. Scaffolding involves an educator finding the balance between offering support, whilst creating enough challenge for the child. When we scaffold, we integrate multiple teaching strategies in order to break down tasks and ideas into achievable stages for the child to move through.

+ Researching

Educators work together with children to research topics or areas of interests. Together we decide what we want to know and how we will find that information. This could include using digital technology, reading books or interviewing experts in the field.

+ Revisiting

To support and solidify learning, educators can revisit concepts and ideas with children. This encourages reflection and gives the educator an opportunity to ensure they understood the child's thoughts and intentions.

+ Wondering

When we wonder, we create opportunities for children to hypothesise. Wondering opens up possibilities while educators follow a child's lead and thought process.

Educator directed

+ Demonstration

When presenting a new process or idea to children, educators can demonstrate how to achieve a particular outcome. This strategy is beneficial when introducing new equipment or specific tasks a child may wish to learn.

+ Explaining

Educators can use respectful language to rationalise a concept or idea that requires further explanation. This strategy is commonly used when talking to children about issues regarding health and safety.

+ Explicit instruction

There are moments when educators need to respectfully provide explicit instructions. In particular, when we need to keep children safe. Additionally, children with diverse needs may also require instructions that are more explicit to support their learning.

+ Introducing

There are many vital concepts and ideas that we need to introduce to children to initiate awareness. Additionally, through introducing new resources and experiences educators can encourage learning in various ways.

Samples of Dispositions for Learning

Curiosity – Children are inquisitive about the world around them through wondering, exploration and asking questions

Cooperation – Children work positively with peers and educators and learn and grow together

Confidence – Children believe in their ability to attempt new tasks and succeed in their learning

Creativity – Children approach tasks with an open mind and use their imaginations to create and explore new ideas

Commitment – Children complete tasks they begin and see them through till the end

Enthusiasm – Children approach their learning with excitement and a positive outlook

Imagination – Children form and create new ideas through experimentation, inquiry and problem-solving

Persistence – Children persevere with tasks even if things do not go according to plan

Reflexivity – Children are able to stop and reflect on how their experiences and interests shape how they understand the world

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