



## From Little Things, Big Things Grow

Tis' the season to be growing! Spring has arrived. Plants are sprouting, flowers are blooming and vegetables are growing. What a perfect opportunity for children to learn about nature and growing foods. There is nothing quite like the delight of growing your own vegetables, flowers or grass. Generally growing vegetables is easy (compared to other plants), depending on the type chosen. Nor do you need masses of space to grow vegetables or a specified vegetable plot, since there are more and more possibilities for growing vegetables in containers, such as potato planters, plant pots, hanging baskets or window boxes. Vegetables are actually some of the easiest plants to grow, especially from seed. To encourage children's enthusiasm, let them choose what types of vegetables they want to grow and you will both be delighted with the results. Flowers and grass can be planted in small individual pots or paper cups. The opportunities are endless. Given half a chance (and a minimum of encouragement), most children will become totally enthralled by the magic of gardening, especially if they have their own plot or, at the very least, a pot to look after.



Children will be most excited about growing something they can eat. Many children have little idea that peas grow in pods on a plant or that the beetroot on the hamburger bun didn't start its life in a tin. Imagine their excitement when they can sow seeds into the soil and follow the plant right through until it's ready for picking. An edible garden is a garden that contains flowers, herbs, seeds, berries and plants that you can eat. Children like large, brightly coloured flowers and vegetables that grow quickly. Plants like sunflowers, corn and pumpkins are suitable. You should also consider using varieties of plants that have sensory and textural qualities as well. Sensory plants are plants that have special smell, taste, touch and sight qualities.

Gardening for children is valuable, they will learn about nature, the environment and responsibility but can also learn many new skills,

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TERMS  
LETTER

## From Little Things, Big Things Grow (cont.)

have fun, play and develop self-confidence by spending time in the garden tending to plants and growing, preparing and using their own food. Most children enjoy being outdoors and love digging in the soil, getting dirty, creating things and watching plants grow. Planting and growing gardens is like digging and finding treasure.

Toddlers, preschool, primary school aged and older children will all have different expectations and learning experiences from exposure to gardening and growing experiences. Younger children will require careful supervision during activities. Older children are physically capable of handling a variety of activities including lifting, carrying, mulching and pruning. Infants can watch things grow and even smell the different aromas. Toddlers can water plants, preschoolers can plant, take care of seeds and participate in cooking activities and school age children can take full responsibility for planting, growing, harvesting, preparing and cooking with vegetables.

Most children will be naturally interested in their surrounding environment; however there are some ways you can encourage interest and curiosity. Show enthusiasm yourself, read books, take notice of things that might be growing in gardens outdoors, bring fresh flowers into the room (providing no allergies), have a couple of small plants indoors at children's level then regularly flower. Ask children open ended questions about the outdoor environment when playing outside or even talk about plants and foods at mealtimes. Introduce new objects or props such as a scarecrow into the garden, get children to make them. Use a compost bin for scraps, use worms farms in tanks for children to watch or even involve children in preparation of meals.

Its amazing how starting from one small thing, how big things grow!

The educational benefits and development of new skills and knowledge includes:

- **Responsibility** - from caring for and tending plants.
- **Understanding** - as they learn about cause and effect (for example, plants won't thrive without water, weeds compete with plants etc).
- **Self confidence** - from achieving their goals and enjoying the food they have grown.
- **Love of nature** - a chance to learn about the outdoor environment in a safe and pleasant place.
- **Reasoning and discovery** - as they learn about science, botany, nutrition and simple construction.
- **Physical activity** - that is fun and productive.
- **Cooperation** - including shared play activity and teamwork.
- **Creativity** - finding new and exciting ways to grow food.
- **Curiosity**- about nature and the world around them.
- **Nutrition** - learning about sources of fresh food. Healthy foods.
- **Cooking** - Preparing food, using utensils and the science of cooking.



- **Safety and hygiene** - In preparation of food, use of tools and utensils, washing foods and hands, eating safe foods from nature.
- **Creates a sense of belonging** – working together with others and maintaining connections to their home life's and the environment that surrounds them.
- **Reflects and shapes Identity** – Use of cultural foods and seeds. Creates a homelike environment. Teaches children different concepts and capabilities of themselves.

There are numerous experiences where children can be involved in gardening.

- Preparing the soil with organic fertiliser.
- Planting vegetables, fruits and flowers in the correct season.
- Watering the garden.
- Weeding.
- Gathering seeds and dried flowers.
- Deadheading flowers.
- Replanting and re-potting.
- Composting, recycling and mulching.
- Using the worms from the worm farm.
- Picking vegetables and fruits when they are ready to eat.
- Preparing food.
- Healthy cooking, making salads and preparing school lunches.

Some idea's you may not have thought of:

- Encourage older children to track growth of plants or vegetables by either measuring or drawing pictures.
- Grow grass in large pots and use as a prop for small wooden dolls and furniture.
- Grow grass in garden beds or wooden boxes to use as seats.
- Make grass heads where children can make their own hair styles with grass.
- Crazy caterpillars.
- Plant surprise vegetables like purple cauliflower, red lettuce, a tomato that masquerades as a pepper.
- Encourage children to pick and try food fresh from the garden.

### Planning of a Garden

When planning the children's vegetable garden, let them not only choose the plants, but also the location and layout. Just be sure that the garden is located in a sunny area that is easily accessible to water. Also, make sure that it is easily viewed by you, so the children can be supervised.

Vegetable gardens do not have to be laid out in traditional rectangular plots, unless of course, the children want it to be. Vegetable gardens can be designed and grown in raised beds or containers. This works especially well for areas with little space. Vegetable gardens can also be grown in a circular pattern with various sections divided



by different plants, flowers and grass much like slices of pizza. Allow children to use their imagination and the possibilities are endless. Offer your ideas, but let them come up with some of their own. Suggest the inclusion of the sitting area or perhaps even a secluded play area. After all, most children love hideouts and special places.

Sunflowers are great for creating fun, private retreats. Plant some morning glory vines in between and let them climb up the stalks for additional privacy. This could be set off to the side somewhere or planted along the edges of the children's garden.

Let the children help with soil preparation, seed planting, and maintenance. To help encourage these gardening tasks, provide them with the right sized tools and a special place for storing and reaching them. Use this opportunity as a teaching tool about the importance of healthy soil, proper watering, and weeding in the garden. Children often enjoy learning while given hands-on instruction.

Explain the role of wildlife in the vegetable garden, and how both plants and animals depend on one another for their survival. Do not over stimulate them, however. Allow children to move and learn at their own pace, keeping everything age appropriate.

Let's not forget all the safety aspects of gardening too. Here are a few safety tips that will help make the garden and experience safe for all children:

- Select the correct size tools.
- Keep sprays and fertilisers out of reach; garden organically whenever possible.
- Do not use chemicals.
- Provide safe equipment and tool storage.
- Secure fences and gates.
- Provide shade in summer with umbrellas or shade cloth.
- Encourage children to wear a hat, sunscreen, suitable clothing and gumboots.



- Be careful with buckets of water around very young children and toddlers.

**Hint:** Making gardens can be cheap and can save money in the long run by using foods that are grown in the meals that you provide for children. Contact your local council to see if there is any funding available for introducing these types of educational programs into your service. For further information or where to get help you can contact your local plant nursery, community or garden groups, your local horticultural Therapy Association or Council.

#### Key Resources

Better Health Channel

[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bharticles.nsf/pages/Gardening\\_for\\_children?Open](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bharticles.nsf/pages/Gardening_for_children?Open)

The Kids Garden

<http://www.thekidsgarden.co.uk/TheKidsVegetableGarden.html>

### A Song of flowers

Sung to: "Sing a Song of Sixpence"

Sing a song of flowers, flowers all around.  
Flowers that are growing, growing in the ground  
Flowers of each colour make a wonderful view.  
Red and orange and yellow.  
And blue and purple, too.

### I'll Plant A Little Seed

Sung to: "I'm A Little Teapot"

I'll plant a little seed in the dark, dark ground.  
Out comes the yellow sun, big and round.  
Down comes the cool rain, soft and slow.  
Up comes the little seed, grow, grow, grow!

## Drawing, A Child's Language

Drawing is a symbolic activity where children can make meaning of the world. Children can be creative, imaginative, express feelings and thoughts, use it as a way of communicating; they can explore and experiment with a variety of mediums, develop fine motor skills and stimulate brain activity.

It is important that adults provide some type of drawing experience for children as a daily choice of activity, where they can have the opportunity to express themselves anytime they want or need to.

Some ideas for drawing activities include:

- |                            |               |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| ■ Grey Led                 | ■ Charcoal    | ■ Chalk       |
| ■ Coloured pencils/ textas | ■ Slate       | ■ Bark        |
| ■ Water colour pencils     | ■ Oil pastels | ■ Wax crayons |

*Provide blank paper for children to decide on what **they** want to draw.  
The value of learning will come from their explorations.*



## Do you have a template?

Frequently when services are beginning to embrace the National Early Years Learning Framework they often feel that there is a way it should look, that there should be some type of template for how documentation within the framework should be structured. In many ways, if this was the case, the national framework would not serve the purpose that it has been developed for, to encourage early childhood educators to find meaning in their relationships with children and families and to provide a responsive and unique experience that fits each and every individual child's learning style. To this end, it is important that the framework rather be viewed as being an external process becomes an internal one that is fully embraced and if you like "lived" into a service.

When beginning to examine your services documentation relation to children's development and learning in relation to the NEYLF, it is important that you start at the start...THE VISION; BELONGING, BEING, & BECOMING.

Educators are challenged to identify and notice how belonging, being and becoming is fostered on a day to day basis. Examining this as a team in light of each individual educators experience of belonging, being and becoming can be quite enlightening when then moving to look at this for children and families. Once we embrace this vision in relation to ourselves as educators, as a team working collectively to provide quality care, as a profession concerned with best teaching practice and education we can then move to understanding and considering what children and families may need to illicit that vision for themselves too.

Questions need to be asked. How do we provide a sense of belonging for our educators here in this service? How do we provide a sense of belonging for the children and families? What does it actually look like in action?

This can be explored via surveys, interviews, graffiti boards in staff rooms, team meetings, whole service meetings the possibilities for talking and listening together are endless.

Once you have examined belonging you may then move onto being and becoming. This is an important step and gives us an opportunity to examine our pedagogy in relation to the framework.

Through this process we may then begin to recognize what we do well in these areas, and highlight improvements that can be made in our practice that would enhance this vision within our services.

Once a strong connection with the vision is established we may begin to connect with the five principles and applying the same questioning and reflective processes. How do we go about developing secure and reciprocal relationships? What would best practice look like do you think? Once we have brainstormed, discussed and researched these principles we can better strengthen

the foundations on which the framework is built and work towards bringing this into the everyday life of our services.

There are a variety of ways to examine these principles which may include:

- splitting them amongst staff teams
- mind maps in the staff room
- through reflective journaling
- through parent communication sheets or suggestion areas
- poster's and displays

By moving through this process we build knowledge and depth to our understandings of the framework in a meaningful way, each step leading us towards the next.

After this, we can move onto the eight pedagogical practices. Once again start the process by considering what ways these practices can influence best practice with children and families. How they can support us to become better educators, how they challenge us to strive for quality. Think about the ways your service is meeting these practices and where improvements can be implemented.

When we come to the area of assessment and the five learning outcomes, with a solid foundation of the vision, principles and practices, we can start to notice what children are doing, recognize the learning and respond using the learning outcomes to guide our thinking. When we document this we now have a meaningful piece of evidence in relation to the child's interests, learning strategies and how a powerful body of information that provides us with the "what's next".

Whilst the language of the framework might appear new and challenging, the more we engage with the document rather than rushing to having it "look" like we are "doing" the framework, the more engaging it becomes for us as educators as well as the children and families. With familiarity we notice learning occurring. We begin to identify the learning outcomes that are relevant to what we see, recognizing the learning taking place and responding authentically and respectfully to each child. We are not documenting for no reason, we are on a meaningful journey that will not only support the child but will support the child as a member of the group and ourselves as educators. A win/win situation is, so much more powerful and exciting!

So don't rush to the template or formula approach, brainstorm, discuss, live it and see what your service needs to embrace the NEYLF in a meaningful way for your service.

There are plenty of resources available to support services, but ultimately each service needs to find their way of expressing and documenting it within their own setting, responding to their own needs.

Enjoy the journey!



# Children's Learning in the Early Childhood Phase

Research from neuroscience, psychology, education, human development and sociology supports the understanding that what happens to children in their early years is critical to their lifelong learning and health. Positive outcomes in this phase build social outcomes and economic productivity for communities and society.

Children are the focus of learning and teaching. They bring with them a natural wonder and curiosity about their world and their place within it. The role of the early childhood educator is to plan and implement learning experiences that will support each child's learning and development.

The early years provide a critical foundation for lifelong learning and the acquisition of life skills and abilities. Early learning needs to be rich, contextualised, developmentally appropriate and connected to young children's worlds and their community experiences. This phase is characterised by children's rapid rate of growth, learning and development, children's different learning pathways and their multiple forms of expression.

Children's learning is socially and culturally constructed. Their social, emotional, cognitive, physical, aesthetic, spiritual and moral learning and development are highly interdependent and influenced by:

- home
- school
- different carers
- the wider community in which they live
- the way in which the different parts of their world interact.

Social competence and emotional well-being are central to children's educational achievements. They develop social competence through stable, caring and responsive relationships with adults.

These relationships form the foundation for early childhood learning. Relationships are also integral to children's development of dispositions crucial for lifelong learning.

## Learning Dispositions

Learning dispositions are habits of mind that underpin ways of making sense of, and acting in the world. Some dispositions help children to be effective learners. They support learners to recognise, select, edit, respond to, search for and construct learning opportunities. Children develop their dispositions from everyday interactions and experiences. In early childhood the development of the dispositions is paramount for learning and making sense of experiences. Examples of learning dispositions include being curious, resourceful, communicative, cooperative, purposeful, persistent and courageous, all important for effective learning.

## What do Dispositions look like?

Dispositions will look different for each child, and will change as children grow and develop. Children might show these dispositions when they are:

- curious, by reaching out, trying new things, asking questions, investigating, or exploring ideas
- resourceful, by making the most of what is available, seeking out sources or help,
- transferring learning to new situations, or trying new ideas
- communicative, by responding to others, practising ways of communicating, or initiating and maintaining communication
- cooperative, by accepting and taking part in routines, working together with others,
- following the lead of another child or adult, or showing a sense of others' needs
- purposeful and persistent, by sticking at activities, trying a range of options,
- showing determination, or working towards a set goal
- courageous, by taking a chance, trying new things, overcoming challenges, or coping with change.

In the early childhood phase children's learning is complex, rich, varied, surprising and enthusiastic. It is dynamic, with positive, reciprocal, respectful relationships between children and adults which often include fun and humour – keys to successful learning and teaching.



## Opportunity to learn

Opportunities to learn are provided through recognition of children as competent learners and their active involvement and participation in the learning and teaching process. Educators build on their understanding of what children can do with assistance as a basis for identifying developmentally and contextually appropriate further steps for learning.

Everyday routines and transitions between experiences provide opportunities to learn and emotional security for children, as do culturally appropriate celebrations. Educators can use children's increasing emotional stability as a basis for expanding their repertoire and approaches to learning as they gain more experience.

## Connection and challenge

Children learn by connecting with each other, adults and the environments in which they participate. Learning begins with the child in the context of the family. Educators make connections with, and build on, children's interests, strengths and prior learning to provide challenges that stimulate learning. These starting points are identified through ongoing communication with children and parents/caregivers, respecting their home cultures and contexts. Children construct their understandings of the world through problem solving, inquiry, trial and error, instruction and practice. Children's interests and strengths are used to further their learning opportunities.



## Children's Learning in the Early Childhood Phase (cont.)

### Action and reflection

In the early childhood years children are actively engaged in their learning. They significantly guide and shape learning experiences through expression of their needs and interests.

Early childhood educators' ongoing observations of children's learning and interactions form the basis for making joint decisions with children and parents/caregivers about opportunities for learning. These opportunities actively involve children, giving them opportunities to reflect on their actions and make sense of the results, and to reflect on and make connections between ideas and experiences.

### Motivation and purpose

Children are motivated by knowing the purpose of learning activities and being given the opportunity to reflect on their learning. This supports them to participate meaningfully in educator-directed learning experiences, act with understanding and reflect on their learning.

Use of language to reflect also enables children to describe their motivation and purpose for action in experiences they initiate. They need to be supported to continue to develop the language of learning and thinking to enable them to be reflective thinkers and to set goals for action in subsequent learning.

### Inclusivity and difference

Educators create valuable learning opportunities when they take into account children's language, culture, health, location, values, abilities and disabilities, and previous education.

Early childhood educators work together to develop inclusive learning programs that give all children opportunities to learn and use a range of teaching techniques such as:

- modelling
- scaffolding
- suggesting
- telling
- instructing
- encouraging
- providing feedback
- questioning
- providing opportunities for experience.

### Independence and collaboration

Early childhood educators, families and communities are instrumental in developing children's understandings of themselves as individuals and members of a group. Working together, they help children to manage their own behaviour in a way that builds respect and caring for themselves, others and their environment. A growing awareness of self, their strengths and respect for others is important for all children to achieve

social competence and emotional well-being. Real-life situations and day-to-day interactions in playrooms and schools provide opportunities for children to develop concepts, values and skills that underpin learning and living as members of a community.

### Supportive environment

A supportive learning environment takes into account the physical, social and emotional and time needs of children. This includes learning that:

- promotes the use of indoor and outdoor spaces
- reflects children's cultural contexts
- promotes interactions of children and adults within learning spaces and the wider school community
- encourages day-to-day routines that provide security for children, ensure they have sufficient time to engage in experiences and result in deep-level learning.

A supportive environment is sufficiently flexible to respond to spontaneous learning opportunities.

It ensures children are physically and emotionally safe and feel they belong. A supportive environment has resources that children can access easily, encouraging them to be independent, responsible and autonomous. In this type of environment, children learn to exercise choice. They also develop self-regulation, learn appropriate behaviour and have opportunities to use their imagination and initiative.

Being a part of a community of learners, where adults as well as children talk about their learning, helps children to recognise the value of collaborating with others.

### Play

There is a strong relationship between learning and development through play, which impacts on children's development in the following areas:

- physical
- social
- memory
- self-regulation
- language and literacy skills
- school adjustment
- academic learning.

Recent research indicates that active, stimulating play promotes optimal development in the growing brain. As children learn and develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually, their play changes and becomes increasingly sophisticated. Play empowers children to solve problems, make decisions, explore and negotiate, and express themselves in situations relevant and meaningful to them.

Play for learning and more educator-directed approaches are equally valued in the early childhood phase. Evidence shows that:



- deep-level learning occurs when children are fully involved
- children are more likely to be fully involved in play than in other activities
- well-developed play impacts on children's social and academic skills.

While play for children with additional learning needs or for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may look different, its value remains. In fully developed, make-believe play children learn to regulate their own behaviour and that of others. This assists them to see others' perspectives. Play that is less well-developed, due to lack of time or lack of adult involvement, will not produce the same outcomes.

In play, children use language to realise their purpose and potential. In so doing, they also practise the essential skills that underpin social competence and support learning across the curriculum. Communication skills that underpin literacy – telling, narrating and describing – are often foregrounded in play. Play also has positive effects on phonological awareness, vocabulary and

letter recognition and offers opportunities for children to develop and practise mathematical language and specific skills and understandings.

Many children need their play to be scaffolded by adults. Some children enter school not knowing how to pretend, and their learning will not be enhanced unless scaffolding occurs. As children learn and develop, their play changes and this demands change in the way educators support play. Play is a key component of effective practice throughout this phase, allowing children to learn new things and use both the new and what they already know in meaningful situations.

*Resource: Early Childhood (K-3) Syllabus*  
[k-10syllabus.det.wa.edu.au/content/...k-3.../syll2\\_ec\\_sec2\\_vf.pdf](http://k-10syllabus.det.wa.edu.au/content/...k-3.../syll2_ec_sec2_vf.pdf)



## What's Cooking?

Children enjoy cooking and taking part in preparing their own food and meals. Why not use some of the vegetables and fruits that children have grown from their very own vegetable patches. Here's some fun ideas you might like to try.

### Bugs on a Log

Make **"logs"** from any of these foods:

- Celery stalks (cut to about 3 inches long)
- Apples (cut in halves or quarters with cores removed)
- Carrot sticks (cut to about 3 inches long)

Top the logs with a spread:

- Cream cheese
- Avocado dip
- Grated cheese
- Egg salad

Sprinkle **"bugs"** on the spread:

- Sultanas
- Unsweetened cereal
- Sunflower seeds
- Golden raisins

**WARNING:** Young children can easily choke on seeds, hard fruits, raw vegetables and grapes. Do not give these foods to infants. Cut foods into small, easily chewed finger foods for toddlers and preschoolers who are still learning to bite and chew. Watch children of all ages closely whenever they are eating.

### Fruit Juice Pops

#### Ingredients:

- Fruit juice from freshly squeezed fruit (You can add small soft pieces of fruit once squeezed)
- 2 cups plain yogurt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 6 paper cups
- 6 wooden icy-pole sticks

#### Method:

1. Mix all ingredients together in a medium bowl.
2. Divide and pour the mixture into the six paper cups (generous 1/3 cup mixture per paper cup).
3. Insert an icy-pole stick for a handle.
4. Cover and freeze until firm.

**NOTE:** To remove the paper cup from the icy-pole, hold the paper cup under tap water for a few seconds.

Recipe makes 6 servings

(A child can help measure ingredients, mix ingredients, juice fruit, insert icy-pole sticks and arrange paper cups.)



# Improve the quality of your service with **ONLINE** professional development

**Our ONLINE workshops are subsidised under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program in a number of States and Territories – check with your Professional Support Co-ordinator or visit our website.**

**One World for Children is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) which delivers nationally accredited qualifications from Certificate III to Advanced Diploma level in both children's services and out of school hours care. We train extensively throughout Victoria, specialising in workplace training and assessment and offer online training, nationally.**



**Our online "Care for Babies" workshop has proven to be very popular.**

One World for Children is an industry-based Registered Training Organisation (RTO) specialising in the delivery of competency based training programs to the children's services industry since 1998.

We have developed a range of professional development training sessions for the childcare sector using a new and innovative approach, which will enable all services, regardless of geographic location, access to quality professional in-servicing that is appropriate to their needs.

Our workshops focus on assisting child care service providers to achieve and maintain quality assurance standards, and is an effective tool for fostering industry networking.

To benefit from this new and innovative approach to ongoing professional development, all you need is a computer with speakers, internet access and a microphone.

What we provide is a platform that uses the latest VoIP programming combined with electronic white board, chat areas and a number of different communication tools, making online learning visually stimulating, interactive and fun!

If you've never heard of VoIP, get ready to change the way you think about communication. VoIP or Voice over Internet Protocol, is a method for taking analog audio signals, like the kind you hear when you talk on the phone, and turning them into digital data that can be transmitted over the internet,

turning a standard internet connection into a great learning and communication tool!

Imagine all of your staff participating in workshops without leaving the workplace. What a positive impact this could have on the quality of your service and all for the fraction of the cost!

Our virtual classroom enables 20 participants to partake in relevant, current workshop sessions whilst actively engaging and interacting with a professional qualified trainer, and networking with each other.

Features of this innovative virtual classroom include an interactive white board, powerpoint presentations, video clips, slide shows, web tours and two-way voice.

The appeal of face to face interaction is now captured in our virtual classroom, however the associated costs have been substantially lowered.

Each session is available on various days with varying times on an ongoing basis, putting you in the position to allow everyone of your staff the opportunity to participate in a session that addresses an identified need within your service.

No travel time means staff replacement cost is minimised and you have the added benefit of staff being available in the workplace should the need arise.

## **Highlights from our calendar...**

### **Building a strong sense of identity**

This will be the first of five sessions targeting specific discussions around the learning outcomes of the new National Early Years Learning Framework.

The session will focus on the importance of understanding how children construct and develop their own sense of who they are and how they develop a sense belonging within the family and community. It will examine the importance of early experiences in relation to this. The connection between the vision, belonging, being, and becoming and the shaping of one's identity will be discussed, and the areas of attachment, social and cultural heritage, evolving experiences and positive relationship building will be explored.

Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own knowledge, beliefs and values, as well as critically examining documentation and the provisions within programs.

**Ideal for: Qualified Child Care Workers**

### **Practices and principles in action**

Participate in this session to discover how values can be viewed through a lens; where educators or services can reflect on current practice. Take this opportunity to look at ways to improve or renew practices based on your values. Your services values should underpin practice that is focused on assisting all children to progress in to their full potential.

Share your thoughts, or come along and listen to some ideas on implementing the values and current practice.

**Ideal for: ALL Child Care Workers**



### **Connecting children with the world**

This session will target specific training and dialogue around the effect of experiences and relationships that assist children to make connections to their world. The relationship this has to the vision of the National Early Years Learning Framework in terms of belonging, being and becoming will be examined as part of a holistic approach to children's overall learning and development. Early childhood services who provide children with opportunities to interact together and more broadly within their communities allow children to gain important skills and feelings of validity, experience interdependency, and build on their own self identity.

The session will provide a forum where participants can reflect on their current practices in relation to connectivity and share and extend on ways to further enhance children's contributions and connections to their world. The session will look at diversity, social responsiveness, fairness and justice and how we can provide programs that allow children to explore and experience this.

**Ideal for: Qualified Child Care Workers**

***"I was impressed, very impressed. Also excited. I kept thinking who I would like to tell about it and how may I use it in my own centre. This is going to be an invaluable tool. It will make training, up skilling and interaction readily accessible to all. Congratulations One World for taking this step..."***

***Pauline Burgwin, Director, Wattletree Early Childhood Centre***

# Save time and money with online workshops



# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Online option!

In addition to delivering quality training programs, One World also offers an assessment only service. Known as a recognition of prior learning, or up-front assessment, RPL is a streamlined process of assessment of the competencies that a person has gained through life, work and formal study. Assessment is undertaken by our trained assessors against the competency standards required for each qualification. RPL can lead to either a statement of attainment or a complete qualification.

**The Community Services Training Package (CSTP) recognises that as lifelong learners we all acquire knowledge and develop skills over our lifetime. That's why training packages introduced recognition of prior learning, and in so doing, paved the way for many skilled and knowledgeable practitioners to achieve their career aspirations, sooner, rather than later.**

The introduction of the CSTP in 1999 enabled our team to develop an RPL process that has enabled individuals to gain, or to work towards gaining, a Children's Services or Out of School Hours Care qualification from Australian Qualifications Framework Level 3 (AQF3) through to an Advanced Diploma of Children's Services (AQF6).

CHC30708	Certificate III in Children's Services
CHC50908	Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care)
CHC60208	Advanced Diploma of Children's Services
CHC41208	Certificate IV in Children's Services (Outside school hours care)
CHC51008	Diploma of Children's Services (Outside school hours care)

An RPL process is primarily a self funded service, although it is at times available as part of a government funded program. In addition to being offered as an assessment only pathway to a qualification, our trainers will also conduct a skills assessment for all training participants at the commencement of training to identify competencies already held and those yet to be attained.

RPL is a valid process that ensures that you are not offered structured training for competencies you have already achieved, and that you gain appropriate recognition for the competencies you have already acquired.

## Recognition of Prior Learning - Online

**An important component of the RPL assessment process is the evidence portfolio. It can be a time consuming task to develop a portfolio that adequately addresses each of the competency's elements and performance criteria, and to gather evidence and supporting documentation.**

- In recognising this One World has developed an online program that steps you through developing your portfolio using templates.
- This program simplifies and streamlines the RPL process for the participant by providing an individual assessment plan available to the participant on their MyWorld homepage, which outlines in detail each of the competencies the participant is required to include in their portfolio.
- It also provides access to the required competency templates within a password protected site, enabling participants to work on their portfolio, save, and come back to it, whenever they like, wherever they have access to the internet.
- To assist even further, we provide practical tips for each competency along the way, with suggestions for further evidence and requests for specific supporting documentation when required.
- Our assessors are also able to view your portfolio online, and are available to provide you with specific feedback to assist you further in the development of your portfolio.
- When all competencies on your assessment plan are completed you can submit online as a completed document, and mail your hardcopy documents to your assessor.
- Of course, on-the-job competency is still assessed in your workplace, and online doesn't mean out of touch! As always, we maintain frequent contact with you throughout the RPL process, guiding you and providing support and



"View of sample online template"

assistance whenever needed.

The cost of the RPL process is largely dependent on how much or how little preparation you put into developing your portfolio of evidence and any formal training that you may have completed. One World offers two ways of completing an RPL process:

### 1. The participant preparing their own portfolio:

- Participant uses the online templates to complete all evidence requirements.
- Once all the evidence is completed, a One World assessor assesses all written evidence first.
- Once the written evidence has been assessed, then two full day observation visits are arranged with the participant at their worksite. The on site assessment visit validates that the participant is able to put into practice what they have submitted in a written form.
- After final on site visit has complete, participant will meet with trainer for a final interview to consolidate all forms of assessment to meet competence.

### 2. A One World developed portfolio.

- Participant meets with assessor for assessor to begin documenting evidence on behalf of the participant. This process is repeated until all evidence is compiled.
- Once the written evidence has been compiled, then two full day observation visits are arranged with the participant at their worksite. The on site assessment visit validates that the participant is able to put into practice what they have submitted in a written form.
- After final on site visit has complete, participant will meet with trainer for a final interview to consolidate all forms of assessment to meet competence

**The development of the online RPL program came from a desire to make the process less daunting and more user-friendly for our participants. We hope we have achieved our aim. If you are enrolling into an RPL program be sure to enquire about RPL online.**

**Think you may be a candidate for an assessment only RPL process that may lead to either a statement of attainment or a complete qualification? Then simply enquire online or contact us on 1800 006 533.**



**Ph 1800 006 533**

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email: [training@owfc.com.au](mailto:training@owfc.com.au)**

## Excursions or 'Incursions'?

*Written by Katie Sutherland*

Whether it's a visit to the local pet shop or a day trip to the aquarium, excursions are a cherished part of early childhood education. However, for a variety of reasons educators are shifting away from such forays into the real world, with some even swapping excursions for 'incursions'. Katie Sutherland reports.

Often it is the simple things that we, as adults, take for granted that delight children the most—a trip in a rickety train carriage, splashing about in a puddle, or rolling in crunchy autumn leaves at the local park. There is much to be said for an outing to entertain restless children or simply to break up the day. And the learning opportunities from such adventures can be carried over for days on end, with discussions, stories or art projects. But it seems that even the cheapest and easiest excursions are passed in many childcare settings. Some centres have cut down on the number of excursions they embark upon, while others have taken the drastic measure of replacing outings altogether with the convenience of 'incursions' (visiting entertainment).

Most educators blame time constraints, cost, lack of staff and willing parents, or spiraling insurance expenses and claims. The stipulations of the Children's Service's Regulation's also scare some people off, as childcare consultant Lisa Bryant explains. 'The problem is not that the regulations are overly onerous on children's services staff, it's that staff feel overwhelmed by what they believe they have to do for an excursion,' she says. For some services, the higher ratios that are needed for excursions are problematic as they can't get parents to help out. For others it's seatbelts, organising a bus with seatbelts, or the cost of hiring one. 'We've just reached a stage, where out of fear of breaching safety requirements, staff are shying away from even believing that excursions are possible.'

Meanwhile, the typical excursion is undergoing a transformation. Today, it is fairly rare to find a centre prepared to rise to the challenge of taking 25 children or more on a day trip to the zoo or museum. Instead, it's more commonplace to see intimate groups of five or six children holding hands as they make their way to the local library, or standing under the local bridge to hear the trains pass overhead.

Fran Bastion, director of Earlwood Children's Centre, believes that introducing children to their local area helps them forge a sense of community. Her centre often takes the children to the local café for a babycino or to the shops to buy the newspaper.

'Children are building a very clear and concise understanding of what their local community looks like and being seen to be active participants in it,' she explains. 'I think that's very important, especially if we're looking at building a sense of social capital and awareness of people accepting children as civic participants. And of course we're strong advocates

for raising the profile of early childhood and I think the children are our best advertisement.'

Wendy Shepherd, Director of Mia-Mia Child and Family Study Centre at Macquarie University, agrees that excursions into the local community are valuable, but stresses that it's important to consider your objectives.

'I think excursions are important, particularly for children in long day care so that their day has light and shade and a variety of interest,' she says. 'We go for walks just for the sake of looking at the trees or listening to the wind in the trees, lying on the grass or rolling down a grassy hill. But you still need to think carefully about... the excursion's purpose and what you think might be engaging for the children. You have to take into account that children are learning about things at all different points. You have to know your children well to know what they can cope with out and about.'

She adds that excursions are only worthwhile if they are relevant to children's interests. The trend is to 'homogenise' all of the children's responses to an experience, rather than consider the particular children for whom the excursion may be relevant.

'Consider going on an excursion to the shops to show the children a rich array of fruit—smell the fruit, handle the fruit, touch the fruit, go to the flower shop, look at the flowers and smell the flowers,' she says. 'As well as building community awareness by being in that shop, there are possibilities at the child's level for gaining another experience. Yes, they'll be going to the shop with their mums and dads but they're not there with their friends. It's a different context for them.'

Mimi Wellisch is a registered psychologist and early childhood expert. She is also a strong advocate for simple excursions planned around children's interests: 'Don't forget that children's brains are two and a half times faster than those of adults, so they need stimulation... Even a short walk to the local post office is exciting and new when in the company of [the children's] friends and teachers,' she says. 'Children see things differently on an excursion than when they are on a daily errand, posting a letter with their parents, this trip is for their benefit alone. 'Children are part of the community and we have to make an effort, especially for children who spend long hours in day care. This is to ensure that they are out there learning about life, rather than locked away inside an artificial child-scaled environment week in, week out for most of their childhood years.'

Educators know that when it comes to group work, the smaller the number of children, the better the learning experience. Excursions are no different, says Shepherd. As well as being easier to organise, and requiring fewer staff members or parents, excursions for five or six children are of far greater value than big expeditions





where some children may miss out on the lesson. 'If you go out in a herd, some children may have a question, but there's no one to answer,' she explains. 'So what's the point in going?' 'Of course, the younger the child, the smaller the group size should be. Children's bids for attention and for information seeking, needs to be responded to. Otherwise, why go?'

Bastion says part of her centre's excursion philosophy is taking children in small intimate groups. 'Those old excursions where you used to take 20 or 30 children out at a time, which were all about crowd control and counting heads, weren't valuable. They weren't of value to the educators and they certainly weren't of value for the children.'

That said there is still much to be gained from a well-organised day trip that may involve taking a bus, packed lunches and a few enthusiastic parents. The key is in ensuring the excursion compliments children's interests and projects and facilitating plenty of different types of learning experiences, explains Bastion. 'Some of the children had been on the Sydney Harbour Bridge 75th anniversary walk so there has been some investigation going on in and around the harbour bridge. There's an excursion planned where they'll be taking their own photographs of the harbour bridge and so on,' she adds. 'Primarily, we work towards linking these excursions to support children's interests... We think about prospective experiences to support children's learning, visual arts experiences, language and literature and excursions are right up there with that.' 'What sort of learning potential is available to our children beyond the four walls of this service that's going to help consolidate an understanding of the subject matter or maybe entice them to ask further questions about that?'

Maria Pender is the director of Clovelly Child Care Centre, where excursions are still very much on the agenda. The centre recently hired a bus took 25 excited children to a Babies Proms concert at the Sydney Opera House. As well as the educational nature of the concert, the children came back brimming with stories about the trains, the Opera House and the harbour.

'I just think it's very sad that people don't feel brave enough to cope with a big excursion or even a small excursion,' says Pender. 'We take our babies up to the corner and catch the bus for one stop. We see the bus every 20 minutes here and they're in love with the bus. But a lot of kids have never been on a bus or a train or a ferry. We go and post letters and we'll go for a walk around the block to find dogs and say hello to them through the fence. It's great for language development, but it's also about developing their environment.'

Pender admits much of her drive for keeping excursions alive comes from wanting to empower children with the same sense of freedom she had as a

child. 'We used to run the streets when we were kids and your mother would call you in when dinner time came,' she reflects.

'Children can't do that anymore and because of the nature of society, you can't even let them go down to the park by themselves.'

'I just think in early childhood today, for me personally, I want those children to experience whatever's possible. If that mean's going on an excursion or even going out to see the digger on the street, well why not?'

### Day tripper

How to plan for a successful excursion:

- Research where you want to go and select several destinations. You can ask parents for their opinion, they are often resourceful when asked or check the internet as another great resource. Examples of excursion locations we have used are local farms, aquariums, the theatre, library, dentist, bakeries and local parks. Locations are only limited by your ability to plan and research. Find out as much information as you can, such as cost, what transport can you use to get there, travelling times, your state's ratio requirements and facilities at the destination. Also decide which age groups are attending the excursion. Obviously small children need nappy changing facilities and high chairs if they are attending.
- Ask for parent volunteers so you are sure you have enough parental supervision to implement it. We also discuss the cost with parents so they are aware of their contribution. You can often negotiate a great price if a large group is attending, while some destinations allow free entry under a certain age. They may also allow all adults to be free of charge if they are supervising the children.
- In preparations for the day, put a note out to parents asking that their child wear a common colour such as red so they are easily identifiable in a large group, sensible shoes and have sunscreen applied for the day.
- Book your transport. Gain quotes from several transport companies as they can vary widely.
- Discuss as a team what food you will be taking on the excursion. We often have morning tea just before we leave, take 'pop tops' to drink and sandwiches for lunch as the drink containers can re-seal for later use. We clearly label them with individual names and take a healthy snack for the bus ride home. School canteen suppliers are a great resource for these items.
- Discuss the agenda with staff prior to the day and ensure all staff members and parents have a copy. We always include the names of the children they



## Excursions or 'Incursions'? (cont.)

are responsible for, what bus they will be travelling on if there are multiple, the time and location for meeting for lunch and departure, the locations of toilets, if they can buy lunch at the destination and a map of the establishment. We also encourage parents to wear a common colour. Red is our uniform colour and very bright so it makes you visible to the children in your group.

- Discuss the excursion with the children prior to the day. We asked the older children what they would like to do on the excursion as the follow up on their recent project. We ask the older children which parent or educator they would like to spend the day with, and then go through the routine for the day. Before we depart they will eat morning

tea, wash hands and go to the toilet, and put their hats on. We discuss what they will see and do, what to do if they need to go to the toilet and any special rules for the day. On the day we introduce them to the parent responsible for them.

- Reconfirm your destination and transport bookings one week and then one day before you travel.
- On the day, have fun. Enjoy being with the children in a new learning environment and observing their reactions.

*Resources: Sharing our journey: The emergent curriculum, Rachel Mielekamp, 2005 <http://www.armedia.net.au/editorial/excursions-or-incursions>*

## Making Mealtimes Pleasant, Fun, Easy and Appealing

Creating enjoyable mealtimes and snacks in a child care program will help young children learn healthy eating habits and develop positive attitudes toward food. Consider the following tips to make the meal time experience positive for children in your child care program.

**Make mealtimes pleasant.** Show your enthusiasm for healthy foods. Children will feel more comfortable if you sit with them and share the same meal. Spend time in positive conversations, and make mealtimes relaxed.

**Help children learn self-help skills.** Starting in the toddler years, children can help set the table, serve themselves, spread jam or butter on bread, stir batter, or even pour milk or water from a small jug.

**Remember that eating is a social time.** Children should be seated around a table so they can talk with and observe one another. Important social learning happens during mealtime as children learn new vocabulary and practice skills such as taking turns and sharing. Child care providers should sit with children during meals and encourage conversation.

**Create an inviting atmosphere.** Set up tables where children can face each other to interact in conversation. Set up tables in an attractive manner. Place vases with fresh flowers in the centre of the table. Provide placemats. These can be made by the children themselves whether woven or laminated pictures. This will make the children feel important and part of the mealtime experience.

**Plan fun food activities to encourage children to try new foods.** Read a book about a new food, and then serve the new food as a snack when children are hungry. Let children help prepare foods. Getting children involved in food preparation will boost self-confidence, and may encourage them to try the food they have helped create.



**Supervise mealtimes and eating.** Role model and teach children about health, hygiene, appropriate behaviours' and nutrition. Use this time as one of your learning tools for children.

### Tips to Make Mealtimes Easier

Serving meals to a group of children can be challenging, and encouraging them to take an active role in serving themselves requires good planning. Here are some tips that may make mealtimes in child care simpler.

- **Provide child-sized furniture.** Most child care centres use a child-sized table and chairs for meals. Family childcare providers may use child-sized furniture or arrange chairs, high chairs, and booster seats around the family table.
- **Use serving utensils that make it easier to serve the right size portions of food.** Utensils should be easy to handle. Tongs, smaller serving spoons and scoops work well.
- **Use plastic squeeze bottles.** Children can squeeze sauce, mustard, mayonnaise and other spreadable ingredients onto their foods.
- **Try using serving utensils of a different color.** Having all serving utensils the same color, and a different color from eating utensils, will help children distinguish cooking and serving utensils from eating utensils. It's easier for children to remember not to lick the red spoon. If you can't find colored plastic utensils, mark serving utensil handles with vinyl tape. This tape lasts a long time and stays on well in the dishwasher.
- **Provide child-sized utensils for eating.** Small spoons are essential. A plate with edges or a small, shallow bowl helps young children to scoop up their food more easily.
- **Serve finger foods frequently.** Foods such as small meat or cheese cubes, vegetable sticks and

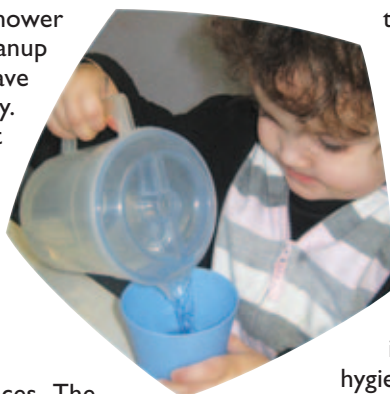


## Making Mealtimes Pleasant, Fun, Easy and Appealing (cont.)

fruit chunks teach coordination to children. Finger foods are a good way to introduce new foods. Foods given will be dependant on the age of the children. Infants like to eat a lot of finger foods where they can feed themselves, small spoons can be used also. As children get older and more competent at their fine motor control of using utensils introduce small forks and smooth edged knives, for example in the preschooler years where this is achievable.

### ■ Learning eating skills can be messy.

Encourage children to help you clean up spills. Place a cloth or old shower curtain on the floor to make cleanup easier if on carpet areas. Have paper towels and a sponge handy. A spill is not a catastrophe, but rather an opportunity to help children learn. Encourage self help skills, independence and an understanding of the process of possible events that may occur during mealtimes.



### Make Foods Appealing

Children have definite food preferences. The following guidelines may make the foods you serve more appealing to the children in your childcare program. Remember to encourage them to try a variety of foods whilst discussing what they are, how they help children grow, how to grow them themselves, and nutritional values to make the experience more exciting.

- **Consider food texture.** Vary textures — crunchy, crisp, smooth, and creamy. Children often dislike lumpy or stringy foods. Avoid overcooking vegetables.
- **Consider food colour.** Serving foods of different colours makes a meal more interesting and appealing.
- **Serve foods of different shapes.** Choose round crackers or cherry tomatoes. Cut sandwiches into triangles. Serve square chunks of cheese and apple wedges.
- **Balance food flavours.** Consider foods with sweet, salty, sour, spicy and mild flavours.
- **Include some well-liked foods in every meal.** Choose healthy foods that are familiar to children. Ask children in discussions what types of foods do they like.
- **Introduce new foods with familiar foods.** Introduce only one new food at a time. Serve with foods children are familiar with so they are more likely to feel comfortable in testing the new food offered.
- **Serve a new food several times.** The more chances children have to try a new food, the more likely they are to accept it. Compare the new food to foods that are already familiar to a child. Offer the new food to a child who enjoys trying new things; other children will follow this child's lead and try the food. Role model by eating the new food yourself and talk about it with children.

■ **Consider food temperature.** Most children do not like very hot or very cold foods.

■ **Go easy on fruit juice.** Fruit juice that is naturally squeezed is a healthy choice but should be offered only in small quantities. When children drink too much juice, they may get full and miss the nutrients they need from other foods. Always have water on offer and discuss the importance of drinking water. Offer milk occasionally as an important nutritious drink and discuss how it's healthy for our bones.

Occasionally you might want to add chocolate topping, fruit or even get the children to make their own fruit smoothies. This will add colour, a variety of flavours to taste and encourage children to participate in cooking or mealtimes, thus developing knowledge, self help skills, independence, learning and involvement.

The **NCAC** outlines guidelines for nutrition and mealtimes for children. These guidelines contain information on standards of discipline,

hygiene, programming, communication, food and nutrition. Some of the issues they cover include:

- **Respect-** Show respect for all children.
- **Environment-** Provide a pleasant, culturally appropriate atmosphere for children at mealtimes that encourage social interaction and learning.
- **Culture-** Provide culturally appropriate meals, food and drink for children.
- **Nutrition-** Promote healthy eating and good food habits.
- **Hygiene-** Have staff trained in correct food handling and hygiene.

Whether you are working in long daycare, family daycare or out of school hours care, consider what meals you offer the children and the types of food you provide. Depending on your service type and the amount of meals you prepare, ensure you are aware of the regulations and standards for nutrition and providing meals to children in your sector as laws, acts and guidelines vary depending on the amount of time a child spends in care.

**Remember mealtimes are a time to get together, socialize with each other, learn about health, hygiene and nutrition and most of all a fun enjoyable experience!**

*Adapted from Extension, More mind reach [http://www.extension.org/pages/Make\\_Mealtimes\\_in\\_Child\\_Care\\_Pleasant,\\_Easy\\_and\\_Appealing](http://www.extension.org/pages/Make_Mealtimes_in_Child_Care_Pleasant,_Easy_and_Appealing)*

*Better Health Chanel Childcare and Healthy Eating [http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcv2pdf.nsf/ByPDF/Childcare\\_and\\_healthy\\_eating/\\$File/Childcare\\_and\\_healthy\\_eating.pdf](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcv2pdf.nsf/ByPDF/Childcare_and_healthy_eating/$File/Childcare_and_healthy_eating.pdf)*

# Obesity in Children

The number of overweight children in Australia has doubled in recent years, with a quarter of children considered overweight or obese. Causes of obesity in children include unhealthy food choices, lack of physical activity and family eating habits.

This rise in the number of overweight children is disturbing because it causes health problems and can lead to social problems. Overweight children are more likely to be teased by their peers or to develop low self-esteem or body image problems. Once children are overweight, it requires a lot of effort and commitment for them to return to a healthy weight.

Overweight and obesity in children are among the most important risks to children's long and short-term health. Overweight children are very likely to become overweight adults.

## Risk factors for childhood obesity

Your body stores unused energy (kilojoules) as body fat. To maintain a healthy weight, you need to use (or 'burn') the energy from the foods you eat. If you eat more than you use, your body will store the extra energy as fat.

Factors that may cause children to become overweight and obese include:

- **Food choices** – such as choosing high fat and sugary foods instead of healthier options.
- **Lack of physical activity** – Australian children are less active than they were in the past.
- **Spending a lot of time on sedentary pursuits** – Australian children watch, on average, around 2½ hours of television a day, as well as spending time using computers and other electronic games. It seems that these pastimes are replacing active ones.
- **Overweight parents** – a family's eating patterns can have a major influence on whether a child maintains a healthy weight. Some overweight parents may be less concerned about their children also being overweight than parents who have a healthy weight.
- **Genetics** – some rare gene disorders cause severe childhood obesity. In many other people, particular genes acting together probably make some children more susceptible to obesity. If there is a family tendency to become overweight, parents need to be even more aware of making healthy food choices for the whole family.

## A worldwide problem

Levels of childhood obesity are increasing at alarming rates in many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. In Australia, one in five children and adolescents are either overweight or obese.

From 1985 to 1995 the number of overweight 7–15 year olds almost doubled. The numbers of obese children has more than tripled. At the current rate, it is predicted that 65 per cent of young Australians will be overweight or obese by 2020.

## Changing society has contributed to obesity

As overweight and obesity have become more common, there have been some major changes in how we live. These changes have led to people either eating more or becoming less active, all of which has contributed to an increase in overweight and obesity. For example:

- The overall cost of food has gone down.
- More food is prepared away from home.
- Energy-dense foods and drinks are more readily available.
- Portion sizes have increased.
- Marketing of energy-dense foods and drinks has increased.
- The use of cars has increased.
- The number of two-income families has increased.
- The time spent in paid employment has increased.
- The role of physical education in the school curriculum has reduced.

## Health problems associated with obesity

Most of the health problems associated with obesity become obvious in adulthood. Early signs of these later problems are commonly found in children. Potential health problems for obese children include:

- Type 2 diabetes – while this condition is most commonly seen in adults, it is now also being diagnosed in children.
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or binge eating.
- Orthopedic disorders – problems with foot structure.
- Liver problems, including fatty liver.
- Respiratory disorders, such as blocked airways and restrictions in the chest wall, which cause breathlessness during exercise.
- Sleep apnea – this is a condition that causes difficulty breathing when sleeping. It also causes snoring, waking often and poor sleep. It makes people feel tired and contributes to poor concentration during the day.
- Cardiomyopathy – a problem with the heart muscle, caused when extra effort is needed to pump blood.

## Obesity in childhood leads to obesity in adulthood

Overweight or obese children are more likely to remain obese as adolescents and become overweight or obese adults. About 80 per cent of obese adolescents will become obese adults.

## Social problems for obese children and adolescents

Obesity can have a major impact on how children feel about themselves and how they interact with others.





Obese adolescents are more likely to have low self-esteem, which may impact on other aspects of their lives such as the development of friendships and competency at school.

Being obese as a child or adolescent increases the risk of a range of diseases and disorders in adulthood, regardless of whether the adult is obese or not. It's important to identify and start to reverse the condition before children become adults. Ideally, overweight and obesity should be prevented.

### Where to get help

- An Accredited Practicing Dietitian, contact the Dietitians Association of Australia
- Your doctor
- 'Go for your life' Infoline  
Tel. 1300 73 98 99

### Things to remember

- Changing lifestyle and dietary patterns have contributed to increasing obesity rates in children.
- Lifestyle and diet changes can help children to maintain a healthy weight.
- Obesity can result in serious health problems in childhood and later life.
- Children who are obese tend to become obese adults.

So what can we as early childhood professionals do?

### Start Right Eat Right

Funded by the Department of Human Services, this highly successful award program is now available across Victoria as a partnering program of Kids – 'Go for your life'. With increasing rates of childhood obesity, children's nutrition is a topic attracting a high level of interest. The Start Right Eat Right award recognises best practice in nutrition for children attending long day care centres.

Start Right Eat Right aims to increase the proportion of young children in long day care introduced to nutritious foods and age appropriate eating patterns in a positive environment and is a suitable strategy for addressing concerns around childhood obesity. Child care centres have the potential to have an enormous positive influence on children's food preferences. They are ideally placed to allow children to experience a

wide variety of foods, providing a good starting point in the development of healthy eating patterns. Start Right Eat Right training also strengthens the capacity of child care professionals to engage families and provide practical and consistent nutrition information on children's nutrition.

Training is provided to both the centre director and cook by an experienced dietitian. To achieve the award, centres must then be assessed and demonstrate competency in:

- Planning and assessing menus to provide children with 50% of recommended daily intake.
- Providing a positive mealtime environment.
- Preparing a comprehensive nutrition policy for their centre.
- Meeting food safety regulations.

### Encouraging children to eat healthy food

To be healthy, children should aim to eat a variety of healthy foods every day, this means the children will have the energy they need to play, learn, concentrate better, sleep better and build stronger teeth and bones. Here are some tips to support healthy eating:

- Enjoy a variety of foods. Serve up a healthy variety of foods each day. These include fruit and vegetables, legumes (such as dried peas, beans and lentils), wholegrain cereals, low-fat dairy, lean meat, fish and skinless chicken. Reduced fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years.
- Begin their day with a healthy breakfast. It improves concentration and builds stamina.
- If your service does not provide breakfast, ensure families are well informed about the benefits of a healthy breakfast.
- Give your children choices. This is not always possible but as often as you can offer the children choices. For instance, ask if they would like apple or banana for morning tea, or which filling they would like in their sandwich.
- Lead by example. Sit with the children and let them see you enjoying the same healthy foods you are offering them, they are likely to join in too.

Adapted from [http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/hav/articles.nsf/pages/Encouraging\\_kids\\_to\\_eat\\_their\\_greens](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/hav/articles.nsf/pages/Encouraging_kids_to_eat_their_greens)



## The Freecycle Network

Freecycling, also known as Free Recycling, is the act of giving away usable unwanted items to others instead of disposing of them in landfills. The Freecycle Network is made up of 4,810 groups with 7,245,000 members across the globe. It's a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving and getting unwanted items for free in their own towns. Each local group is moderated by a local volunteer and membership is free. To sign up, find your closest community by entering it into the search box at [www.freecycle.org/group/au](http://www.freecycle.org/group/au) There are 170 active Freecycle communities around Australia!

NEW!

## Your Questions Answered

In each edition of our newsletter we will be inviting readers to email us with any burning questions you have. Each newsletter we will answer one or two of these questions. You can email your question to: **[yourquestions@owfc.com.au](mailto:yourquestions@owfc.com.au)**

This month our question comes from Nadine who works in a Long Day Care Centre in Victoria. Nadine asks:

### **What do you do when parents don't want their children playing with dirt and sand?**

Nadine it is important to ensure you respect the parent's wishes and requests whenever possible and practical. If you are unable to meet the family's request or need you must ensure either yourself or someone from your service engages in communication with the family about what you will and won't do and why. It is also helpful to have some evidence to offer the family like a relevant policy or procedure or a reference to the relevant legislation.

If your services support the use of dirt and sand as play materials and you think it is beneficial for the children to participate in these activities, you need to find out why the parent objects so that you can address the particular issue. Some possible reasons could be:

- The parent thinks these particular activities are not valuable in the child's development and their time could be better spent on other activities.
- Personally or culturally they don't want their children getting dirty or being perceived as dirty.



- They are worried about germs and infection.

Whatever the reason once you know what it is you can address it. You will need to provide the parent with information to support your position and there are many ways to do this including giving the information to the child to pass on, direct and indirect conversation, posters and newsletters.

For example if a parent is struggling to see the value of play with dirt you could put up a poster that describes and highlights the skills learnt and practiced in the digging patch or when gardening. If the parent is concerned about the child getting dirty you could have a conversation with the parent to negotiate under what circumstances it would be ok for the child to participate focusing on the positive things you could do like provide protective clothing or change the child into clean clothes after the activity. If the parent is concerned with germs and infection you could provide them with some reading on the "hygiene hypothesis", which supports that exposure to germs during early childhood primes the body against allergies and has found being too clean can impair the skin's ability to heal.

Even if you don't necessarily agree with the parent's decision to exclude their child from playing with dirt, if the parent insists and you are unable to persuade the parent with information you must support and act upon the parent's decision.

Thanks Nadine for asking about playing with dirt and sand. If you have a question you would like answered please email us.

## Assessments

Our trainers are keen to remind all learners of the vital importance of copying or backing up all assessments. At times we have run into the problem of learners ensuring us that assessments have been sent in, yet they have not reached our office. We recommend that in all cases you photocopy your assessments before posting them in or taking a back up copy before emailing them in. Yes they are on your hard drive, but these have failed also!

We also ask that all assessments submitted are clearly named. This includes when you send an assessment in the mail, via email or hand it directly to a trainer. At times we are able to piece the puzzle together and find an owner but there are assessments that remain unclaimed.

Please take responsibility for your own assessments and ensure you have your name on them and you have a back up or copy. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

## Take advantage and save yourself time & money!

**Why not send your assessments to us via e-mail:** [assessments@owfc.com.au](mailto:assessments@owfc.com.au)

It will save you time, money and your assessments will get to us promptly and safely.

**Any administration queries may be made directly to:** [admin@owfc.com.au](mailto:admin@owfc.com.au)

**Any technical support/queries can be made directly to:** [tech@owfc.com.au](mailto:tech@owfc.com.au)

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