OUTDOOR PLAY IN WINTER

With the onset of winter approaching, it is timely to focus on the importance of children playing outdoors. As the weather changes and temperatures drop it is even more important that we plan appropriate activities for children and adults to enjoy in the fresh air. During the colder months children are often restricted to playing indoors at home, so it is essential that they are provided with plenty of opportunities for outdoor play when they are in their early childhood environments. Playing outdoors on a windy or cold day will present its own challenges and opportunities for risky freedom. Using a torch outside on those bleak foggy mornings or late afternoons is a safe and exciting way to enjoy the gratuitous fear on which many children, especially boys, thrive.

Playing outside cannot be restricted to warm, dry weather – late autumn, winter and early spring each present their own unique opportunities for learning. Making the most of your outdoor space, whatever its size and whatever the weather, will give young children the opportunities they need to explore and discover, to express themselves and to re-live their experiences through their natural language of movement.

Whilst many early childhood settings have long-established systems and routines for ensuring that children have access to the outdoors throughout the year, there are still instances of educators who are not willing to take a positive view on children spending time out of doors in all weathers.

The reasons given vary from ‘It is too cold, wet, windy, slippery for the children’ to ‘It takes too much time to get ready and parents don’t like their children wet, cold or dirty.’ More often than not it is the educators not the children who don’t want to be out in all weathers. Educators who have a positive attitude to being out outdoors will not only enjoy the experience themselves, but will foster a sense of pleasure in the children as they explore and play together. Providing the right clothing and footwear for children to wear will not only keep children safe and warm but will also allay parents’ concerns.

Practical ideas
As well as ensuring that young children can enjoy free play outdoors, you can use the opportunities presented by the different seasons to enhance all areas of learning and development.

During late Autumn encourage the children to collect natural materials such as gumnuts, twigs and leaves to use as permanent or semi-permanent mathematical resources in your outdoor area.

You can use these resources by:
Setting up an investigation area outdoors where the natural resources are stored in transparent sweet jars, labeled with pictures and words, to help the children make independent choices.

continued on page 2
Provide containers, trays or baskets to encourage the children to sort the natural resources.

Set up a bucket balance in the investigation area alongside the containers of natural materials (a bucket balance is a beam balance with large containers on either end so children can put things into the buckets and try to balance them against one another). Make clipboards, paper and pencils available for them to record their findings.

Introduce the children to the idea of transient art. That is making artwork out of materials in the environment and then returning them to the environment when finished.

Organising a winter walk will provide an opportunity to see how your local environment changes during the winter and to look at the ways we keep people and traffic safe in cold, dull weather. We can observe headlights, street lights etc.

Check the weather forecast and choose a day when it will be dull and overcast, but not too wet, too cold or too windy. Take extra care on foggy or misty days.

Plan a route for your walk that will take you past different examples of signs of winter – bare branches on trees and hedges, gardens without flowers, shop windows full of winter clothes, ‘winter sales’ posters in shop windows.

When you are planning your route think about all the different examples of lights you will see on your outing – lights in houses, street lights, security lights, car headlights, traffic lights, advertising signs, shop windows

Follow your pre-planned route and stop from time to time to allow the children to look around them for signs of winter. Make a note of all the different ideas they come up with to talk about later.

Look out for examples of different types of lights being used in the environment. Talk to the children about the lights they have seen and what they are used for.

For infants and toddlers the chance to experience the elements in the safe confines of warm clothes or snuggly blankets and beanies, enhances their connections with nature and the environment. Free movement for young children brings joy and stimulates a healthy appetite too! All this works towards supporting a strong sense of wellbeing. Younger children also need this freedom to move about, feel the cold air on their cheeks, and create body warmth through stimulating physical activity. For the pre-walker rugged up on a thick blanket outside watching the comings and goings of their peers, enjoying the smells and visual changes in the environment is as much their right as that of older children. Infants need to engage in experiences that connect them to their world.

All children need to play outside everyday, even in Winter. Going outside to run, jump, yell and wiggle gives children the chance to use their large muscles and work off extra energy. Moving out into the fresh air is healthier for children than keeping them inside a closed building where germs can spread easily.

So get on your Winter woolies and open up a whole new winter wonderland for you and the children you care for!!

Taken from www.teachingexpertise.com/.../early-years-outdoor-play-autumn-and-winter-7472 -

---

Helping children develop self esteem

Self-esteem is a major key to success in life. The development of a positive self-concept or healthy self-esteem is extremely important to the happiness and success of children. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves, and our behaviour clearly reflects those feelings.

Tips for encouraging self esteem in children

Use descriptive encouragement and praise

- Teach children to make positive self statements, “I can do this”
- Avoid criticism
- Never embarrass a child
- Teach children about making their own decisions
- Provide limits for behaviour so children are aware of expectations
- Focus on children’s strengths
- Encourage children’s efforts

Everyday for every child, think to yourself, “Have I made a positive impact on children’s self esteem?” It only takes one comment to make a child smile!
Embracing the National Early Years Learning Framework

Written by Julie Barron

A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

The Early Years Learning Framework is an important and timely resource for early childhood education and provides educators across Australia with an opportunity to embrace a consistent approach to principles and practices that underpin a high quality and responsive early childhood service.

The framework provides for educators;

- A clear focus on children’s learning and wellbeing
- A shared language for curriculum in the early childhood field
- A base for planning, promoting and assessing
- Improved quality in early childhood settings
- Cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families (Educators guide to Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Pg 4)

The principles and practices found within the framework are based on the beliefs that;

- Children are capable and competent
- Children actively construct their own learning
- Learning is dynamic, complex, and holistic
- Children have agency. They have capacities and rights to initiate and lead learning and be active participants and decision makers in matters affecting them.

So fundamental to implementing the framework educators need to ensure they;

- Understand the principles
- Make them part of their interactions and practices
- Reflect on them as they design learning environments

Further to this, the interconnectedness of the family and community as well as the early childhood setting on children’s learning and development is clearly recognized.

Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families...Partnerships are based on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations, and attitudes, and building on the strength of each other’s knowledge. (BELONGING, BEING & BECOMING The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia pg 12)

In the framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming are the big picture aims or vision. The five learning outcomes are broad longer term goals of integrated competencies, processes, understandings and dispositions. The points of evidence are the shorter term objectives, and describe skills or content that enable children to achieve the outcomes.

The learning outcomes are centred around five key areas:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators.
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

The framework is not on its own a curriculum document, but more, provides the basis for building curriculums that are responsive to the families and children we serve as early childhood educators.

The framework is based on current evidence of best practice in the early childhood field, but it can only be brought to life effectively by the educators’ commitment to the vision, principles and practices outlined in the framework.

Traditionally when looking at providing education we concentrate on three major areas, curriculum (what we want people to learn), teaching (how we help them to learn) and assessment (how we make judgements about how their learning is progressing). Contemporary practice takes this further, to examine the quality of our teaching and to examine the variety of skills and ways that people develop and adopt as part of the learning process. That is, how do we learn to learn or, what are dispositions of effective learners.

To be able to incorporate quality teaching and build such learning dispositions into our programming, educators now need to develop a consistent approach to reflective practice so that we can think more deeply about what we do and why we are doing it. We also need to embrace the notion that the young child also has desires and interests in what they want to learn and how they are going to learn it, so that collaboration between educator and student becomes viable and necessary in educating. Viewing the child and ourselves as part of a wider social context than just the learning environment itself opens up the importance of making connections with families, and the wider community in which we live and function.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS?

The framework aims to embed reflective practice, inquiry, and partnerships in learning into educators’ everyday practices. For the educators:

Belonging relates to connections and relationships with other educators and professionals from other disciplines, participation in professional organisations and networks, and community involvement.

Being relates to the individuality of each early childhood educator and to the distinctiveness of each team of educators. Individuals and groups bring a unique collection of beliefs, values, interests, and knowledge, experience and perspectives to planning and practice and relationships.

Becoming relates to the importance of learning and reflecting in order to increase professional knowledge and improve skills and practices.

(Educators guide to Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Pg 5)
Embracing the National Early Years... (cont.)

The framework therefore, provides educators with the basis for thinking, talking, and reflecting on best practice in early childhood education. It offers opportunities for trying out contemporary planning and curriculum delivery, and to engage in discourse with colleagues to hear about stories and models of practice utilising the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the framework.

Steps in the inquiry process:
- Reflect upon practices, identify concerns, choose an issue
- Gather information and evidence on what is currently happening
- Reflect upon what the information is telling you
- Frame a question to be explored
- Decide upon action
- Change practice
- Evaluate the change
- Start the process again.

(Overarching questions to guide reflection can be found in the framework on pg 13.)

Try out:
- Select a section from the framework that the team would like to begin with
- Get together to talk about people's responses
- Look at what's visible in your program, review photos to decide what learning outcomes are reflected, look at journals and portfolios, look at displays of children's work around the environment
- Talk about the data you have collected and what it is telling you
- What concerns/challenges does it raise?

Think about:
- Content of your curriculum – what do you teach, what planned experiences do you offer
- Approaches for managing behaviour
- Set up of the environment
- Resources available
- Teaching strategies that are used
- How you assess learning

The framework supports a model of curriculum decision making as an ongoing cycle of information gathering, questioning, planning, acting, and reflecting.

Talk and reflect:
- What did learning look like in your setting this week?
- In what ways does cultural competence influence your curriculum practices?
- How do you currently make decisions and plan for your curriculum. Who is involved?
- In what ways do you listen to and act upon family input
- When considering children's interests how do you decide which interests to follow and which to ignore? Are some more appealing for their 'potential learning value' or because they are a better fit with our own knowledge and resources?
- Are the focuses big enough to be inclusive of children's emergent ideas? Does the curriculum look the same for all children? How do you consider things such as dispositions?
- In what ways does your intent shape your spontaneous interactions?

LEARNING DISPOSITIONS

Katz (1993), defines dispositions as 'relatively enduring habits of mind or characteristic ways of responding to experience across types of situations.' Dispositions are different from skills and knowledge, they are attitudes, acquired from and affected by interactive experiences with the environment, significant adults, and peers. These dispositions can be fostered, taught and learnt and have long term effects on lifelong learning.

What counts in early learning?

To be an effective learner one needs the disposition to learn, social competence and self concept, and emotional wellbeing. This is fully supported by all aspects of the Early Years Learning Framework. Key ingredients for the capacity to know how to learn include,
- Confidence
- Curiosity
- Intentionality
- Self-control
- Relatedness
- Communication
- Cooperativeness

The effective learner will be independent, creative, self motivated, and resilient.

Dispositions are identified as such traits as;
- Curiosity
- Openness
- Optimism
- Resilience
- Concentration
- Creativity
- Perseverance

The Early Years Learning Framework recognises the importance of these habits of mind and encourages educators to consider how to grow these positive dispositions. Active learning environments combined with healthy nurturing relationships along with the responses we give to children, reinforce and develop these dispositions that characterise the effective learner.

In conjunction with using a play based curriculum model alongside intentional teaching, it is possible that early childhood educators can instil positive dispositions towards learning and assist children to develop their own understandings of how they learn and the strategies that are appropriate for them. Also being mindful of dispositions ensures that educators are preparing young children for later academic and lifelong learning.
MONITORING CHILDREN’S LEARNING: NOTICING, DOCUMENTING, AND ASSESSING

Noticing what child can do and taking a holistic view of learning and development by tracking the child’s dispositions, achievements and progress over time is a feature of strengths based assessment. Features of strengths based learning include:

- Enhancement of learning
- Outcomes also focus on dispositions
- Focus for intervention is credit based – what the child has already mastered, disposition enhancing is prioritised
- Focus is on the child within a context, interpretations of observations, discussions and agreements
- Progression is identified over a range of contexts, ie learning stories, photographs child’s voice
- Educators communicate to four audiences- children, families, other staff and themselves

The three main approaches to assessment in early childhood education:

- **Assessment for learning** - extends children's learning by enhancing teaching. Continues through the learning process rather than at the end.
- **Assessment as learning** - assessment is a powerful tool for learning. Documentation of a child’s learning enables children to learn about themselves as learners and develop an understanding of how they learn.
- **Assessment of learning** - emphasises the summative aspects of assessment and confirms what children know, understand and can do. Typically occurs at the end of the learning experience.

Documenting children’s learning involves the collection of information and artefacts that detail and describe the diverse ways that children engage as learners in early childhood settings. Documentation of children’s learning makes children’s learning visible to children, families, and educators. Documentation serves as a form of accountability since it provides a rich evidence of children learning in the early childhood setting.

While documentation makes children’s learning visible, it is not, in and of itself assessment of children’s learning. All approaches to assessment require educators to make sense of, and interpret the information they have acquired. The learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia provide reference points for making sense of what educators have learned about children’s learning.

Educators make good use of assessment information when they use what they have learned through noticing and documenting to:

- Promote sustained shared thinking
- Initiate conversations about children’s learning with children
- Offer feedback
- Model thinking to children
- Plan effectively for children’s current and future learning
- Communicate about children’s learning and progress
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities
- Reflect on approaches and pedagogy that are responsive to the context of the early childhood setting
- Provide opportunities to gain information from as many sources as possible, including the family, co-workers, and the child themselves
- Try to focus on meeting the child’s interests and social interactions as well as remembering developmental domains
- Let the child guide the observation process

CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION

- Learning stories
- Photographic records
- Interviewing children
- Daily reflections
- Collecting samples of work
- Strategies to incorporate child’s voice
- Interview children
- Daily reflections
- Ask for children’s opinions and document
- Take conversation samples
- Parent contributions
- Have regular conversations about what you do
- Provide sheets that only require parents to fill in the blanks
- Bulletin board of work is displayed
- Sending observations home
- Slide shows
- Bags at reception for families to take home and collect things
- Email options

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

NOTICE, TALK, REFLECT, TRY OUT, GO DEEPER

REFERENCES

Belonging, Being, and Becoming- Educators guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (draft Dec 2009-SA)
Educators Belonging, Being, and Becoming – draft educators guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Dec 2009
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 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…

**Foundation Programming**

Foundation planning has been developed to assist child care professionals to fully gain an understanding of what has been known as a foundation of knowledge surrounding the basic fundamentals of program planning. This session will explore the foundation principles that will assist any professional child care worker in designing and implementing a program planning system to ensure that children’s individual needs are being met. The principles that will be covered in this session will include the process of: observing, interpreting, writing individual objectives, planning experiences, evaluating and modifying.

**Ideal for:** Qualified Child Care Workers

**Discovering Learning Stories**

If the word “learning stories” has been used around your service and you have been thinking “what is all the fuss about?”, then we invite you to attend this session to gain an understanding of this powerful tool, being learning stories. Learning stories allow carers to plan experiences that are focused on the child, that come from the child’s lead and are based on children’s observed interests.

Join this session to gain knowledge about using learning stories in your program. Have the opportunity to discuss any questions you may have in learning more about learning stories.

**Ideal for:** Qualified Child Care Workers

---

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

**Contemporary Program Planning**

Together we will explore a range of approaches to curriculum and to documenting children’s learning that incorporate contemporary images of children as strong and competent learners. Contemporary planning must foster collaborative partnerships between educators, children and families. These approaches acknowledge the expertise and interests of children and families and encourage their input in decision making.

Our focus in this session, is to discuss an approach to programming that is specific to contexts and a program that is continually evaluated and modified. We will focus on the process of reflection, evaluation and ongoing improvement.

**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
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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHC30708</th>
<th>Certificate III in Children’s Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHC50908</td>
<td>Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC60208</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma of Children’s Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC41208</td>
<td>Certificate IV in Children’s Services (Outside school hours care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC51008</td>
<td>Diploma of Children’s Services (Outside school hours care)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, whenever 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 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, two full day observation visits are arranged with the participant at their workplace. 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 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, two full day observation visits are arranged with the participant at their workplace. 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.
The Importance of Natural Play

Remember sitting on the grass watching ants scurry about, rounding up friends for a pick-up game of kickball, curling up with a book, collecting and trading marbles and stamps, testing out a new paper airplane design? To adults, it may seem that these activities were not particularly important. But child development specialists say they were crucial in cultivating your creativity and imagination, as well as in expanding your intellectual, emotional and social skills.

And yet, too many people don’t understand the importance of play in children’s development. In today’s society, instead of using their imaginations to build something from a set of wooden blocks or be outside making mud pies, more and more children are becoming overwhelmed with computer games or watching television.

Due to our society’s increased emphasis on academics, many families are much too focused on trying to teach children concrete memory-based concepts. Learning the multiplication tables and the alphabet are very important. But memorizing does not teach you to think. Those skills need to reside inside a mind that has been expanded by the imaginative and joyous exploration of our environment and its materials.

For young children, developing imagination is an important way to gain knowledge. In our adult lives, we rely on our ability to create stories we tell ourselves about possible futures and ways of attaining our goals. Children need to get an early start with storytelling and mentally manipulating various situations. Through play, children express the world inside themselves and order the world outside. Children’s minds are amazing when at work, especially those minds that do not know the “right way to play.” Those children find paths to discovery and understanding. And along the way, they open the door to independence, self-confidence and unlimited potential.

Open-ended and natural play encourages this highly individual experience and is fuelled by imagination. Toys that leave room for a child’s input and creative imagination are the ones that they return to over and over again – they are toys that are captivating and enduring. In fact, recent research shows children who are encouraged in imaginative play, prove to be more creative years later, have a richer vocabulary, are less impulsive and aggressive and often become leaders with their playmates.

Young children are heavily oriented to the senses. They take comfort and pleasure in the feel of wood, cotton, wool and metal. Plastic toys do not give children the rich sensory experience afforded by natural materials. They lack the comfort and warmth. If children are first exposed to toys made of natural materials, they will have a healthy standard by which to judge synthetics. When given the opportunity, children choose, and enjoy playing in natural environments and/or with natural elements.

Why not let our children experience wooden animals or blocks and cotton and wool dolls or puppets? When machine made toys are in such abundance, handcrafted toys take on a new value and significance. They reuinte us with the real world. They also teach us environmental responsibility and an appreciation for nature. Why not stimulate the senses and mind at the drawing table by setting up props with blank paper? Or use wooden dolls in the doll house?

Although natural settings afford almost limitless potential for diverse play experiences and exploration, the space and environment in which it is offered is equally as important. Natural environments are characterised by a number of key features relating to their utility for children’s play. They are highly complex habitats – offering children a multiplicity of encounters and sensations, a diversity of landscape, scenery and texture and an assortment of child-sized spaces, hideaways and holes to explore and inhabit.

Provide open spaces indoors and outdoors to encourage active play, where children can make up their own games or play ideas or provide space where children can have time alone to explore. Either way, by having the environment set up in a way which reflects their own natural environments, materials and surroundings, it will encourage the use of senses, open-ended play, assist children to develop an understanding of nature, provide opportunities for open ended play and stimulate development.

Things you can do:
- Add natural materials to indoors environments and experiences
- Use wooden blocks, dolls
- Provide play dough, clay, cornflour paste, mud, messy play with natural materials
- Use recycled cardboard, cones and materials for pasting
- Use pebbles for counting
- Have nature displays and water play experiences
- Set up home corners with everyday objects from the home environment and avoid plastic
- Use cane baskets for storage in the room
- Build a vegetable patch with children
- Draw with charcoal, chalk, limestone, slate
- Choose experiences that are 10% toy and 90% children
- Communicate to children about the environment, share excitement and enthusiasm
- Provide large and small spaces for play
- Provide unhurried time for open ended play

The opportunities are endless!

Adapted from Nurturing the Playful Mind by Peter Emmenegger
Why do we need a National Quality Framework?

The National Quality Framework will put in place compulsory, national standards to ensure high quality and consistent early childhood education and care across Australia.

This important reform will deliver a higher standard of care for children in the critical areas of education, health and safety and will provide clearer and comprehensive information for families so they can choose the best services for their child.

We know that the first five years of a child’s life shapes their future—their health, learning and social development—and we want to make sure that their future is bright.

Early childhood experts and professionals maintain that quality is critical when it comes to early childhood education and care.

At the moment quality standards across early childhood education and care services vary across Australia and there is often limited information available to help families choose the best service for their children.

The National Quality Framework will require all providers to improve services in the areas that impact on a child’s development and safety and to provide families with quality information to help them make informed choices about services.

What is the National Quality Standard?

The new National Quality Standard will help services to provide the best possible level of early childhood education and care by being clear about the factors that best support a child’s development.

It will also give services and families confidence in understanding what distinguishes high quality or excellent services.

The new National Quality Standard is divided into seven areas that contribute to the quality of early childhood education and care. These areas have been identified by research and are:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children’s health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements (including the number of staff looking after children)
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management

Under each of these areas more detail is provided about what a service can do to provide the highest quality early childhood education and care for a child.

What is the national rating system?

A new rating system will be introduced with each service being rated on the quality of service they provide. Each service will be assessed on their performance across the seven quality areas that make up the new National Quality Standard and given one overall rating. This overall rating is determined by the rating for each of the seven quality areas. This will provide an overall picture of the quality of a service.

All services will need to display their approval and rating information. Ratings will also be available on the internet. For the first time this will provide parents with consistent information to help them compare services and work out which service is best for their child. It will also help services know where they need to improve.

There are five levels against which services across Australia will be assessed based on the National Quality Standard.

- Unsatisfactory: indicates that a service is not meeting the standard and the regulator is working closely with the service to immediately improve its quality. If there is no improvement the centre will be closed.
- Operating Level: indicates that a service is working towards meeting the standard. All new services will commence operation with an Operating Level rating.
- National Quality Standard: indicates that a service is meeting the standard.
- High Quality: indicates that a service is exceeding the National Quality Standard.
- Excellent: indicates that a service demonstrates excellence and is recognised as a leader in the sector. Services will need to apply to be assessed against this rating.

When will the changes happen?

The changes will be put in place in a step by step approach. This will give early childhood education and care providers across Australia time to get ready and adjust to the new requirements, particularly those relating to staff-to-child ratios and qualifications.

The first changes start in July 2010 during a transition phase where services will begin to undergo assessment against the new National Quality Standard. From 1 January 2012, all services will be assessed against the new National Quality Standard. The new National Quality Framework will be in place by 1 January 2012, with changes to staff-to-child ratios and qualifications being phased in over a number of years.

For more information visit:
Creating stimulating environments

How can you design an environment that is aesthetically pleasing, both visually and experimentally?

Planning stimulating experiences and environments involves getting to know the children, how they play, what their interests are, and providing age appropriate and challenging activities. From here you must decide on how you will present them in order to create curiosity, involvement, independence, creativity and interest. The environment needs to be set up at children’s level but how will we make it inviting?

Adding decoration and variety

The environment you provide the children in your care will be the shell for all of the experiences you provide. Treat the environment not only as your own but as also belonging to all who inhabit it; this includes the staff that use the room, as well as the children. Everyone involved should have a say as to how it is decorated, how it smells, sounds and looks. When thinking about the environment you need to consider it as a whole. It is a large part of the children’s program and should be treated as such. Think about the floors, walls, ceiling, sounds, and smells, as well as the experiences that are provided within the room. Look at the whole picture.

To decorate the room you can use:
- art work the children have created
- commercial art work
- photos and posters of real life events, of the children, and of unknown people
- attractive, appealing colour schemes
- natural, commercial and recyclable items
- items hanging from the ceiling and walls
- things stuck to the floor.

Creating an inviting environment

Making areas in the environment inviting and challenging is the key. When this is achieved you will be providing the children in your care with an environment that fosters play and leisure.

To create an inviting environment you can start by:
- Observing the children both individually and as a group. This will assist you to identify their developmental level as well as their interests. Your observation needs to be ongoing, as the children’s interests and developmental levels will change over time.
- Using your creativity and imagination to create an environment that meets the needs, interests and strengths of the children.
- Observing the children’s reaction to an environment. If they are excited and immerse themselves in play within the environment you know you are succeeding.
- Being honest with yourself - do you and the other staff at the centre like being in the environment?

Evaluate the environment regularly using the various methods of observation.
All this, of course, needs to stay within the guidelines of the child care service.

Providing a variety of areas and experiences

Within an environment there are some areas that are mostly always present, although they may change position within the room. These areas still need to look inviting to the children.

Some of these areas include:
- home play area
- block area
- book area
- art area
- music area
- nature area

Within these common areas you can create many different experiences. Let’s look at the block area for an example. In the block area you may set up the following experiences at different times:
- wooden blocks
- construction sets
- animal characters
- people characters
- dolls house
- sand in a container
- shredded paper
- cardboard boxes.

The list is endless, yet all enhance various opportunities for play. The same can be done with all the areas within a room.

Using the space

When planning an area, you need to avoid overcrowding. There are guidelines for how much space is required by children of different ages. You also need to think about including different types of areas including active, passive, indoor and outdoor. This way, children can choose what suits them at a particular time.

Planning space to avoid overcrowding

To avoid conflicts when children are playing, make sure you use the space available to separate active experiences (climbing, running, building with blocks, riding bicycles, etc) from passive experiences (reading books, playing with puppets, drawing etc).

This will involve some planning, based on the number of children registered each day in your room. You need to plan to avoid overcrowding and competition for space and materials, which can result in conflicts.
Different types of areas

By providing challenging, inviting and suitable areas within the environment, the children will grow to know that the environment is theirs and it is based on their needs. You should be careful not to change the environments too often - especially for the younger age groups.

Now that you know about some of the play areas you will find within an environment that cares for children, let’s have a look at the types of areas that your environment should include.

Providing choices

A child care environment needs to have lots of choice! Just like you, children want to choose what they’d like to participate in and when. You should always try to include a choice of experiences, as well as different types of experiences. The choices should be provided consistently over the day with enough time for the children to participate in the experiences they wish to, and should reflect needs, abilities and interests.

The main points to remember about an environment for children are that it should be:

- safe
- hygienic
- presentable
- inviting
- challenging
- stimulating
- inclusive
- supportive of children's strengths, needs and interests.

Respect the children’s rights; respect the environment in which you work; respect the resources you have; and you will find that the children will do the same.

As well as offering choices, you also need to consider the environment in the following ways to encourage the children to play and learn.

- Number of play spaces
- Types of play
- Active/passive play
- Clear pathways
- Private spaces
- Soft spaces
- Spaces for elevation (different levels)
- Natural materials
- Open materials


HOW TO GROW SALT CRYSTALS

**STEPS:**

- Fill a glass jar about halfway with boiling water
- Add some food colouring if you wish
- Add about 2-3 tablespoons of salt to the mixture and stir with a spoon until you can’t see the salt grains, then put more salt in it and shake it!
- Tie a string around a pencil or small stick.
- Cut the string so that it hangs just above the water.
- Balance the pencil on top of the glass jar with the string hanging inside the jar just above the water.
- Leave it on a table for 1-3 weeks and check back every day to see if there are salt crystals on the string.

Note: DO NOT eat salt crystals. Experiment to be done with strict adult supervision!
We are inviting readers to email us with any burning questions they have in relation to children’s services. Each edition of our newsletter will now contain questions from people within the industry where suggestions and information will be provided by our professional trainers. You can email your questions to: yourquestions@owfc.com.au

Our first question comes from Kerry who is a Team Leader at One World for Children. Kerry asks:

**What type of activities should be programmed for outdoors during winter?**

Kerry it is likely that the outdoor experiences you plan for children during winter will be similar or even the same as at other times of the year. However there are a few extra considerations to make. It is important to ensure all children are dressed appropriately for outdoor play during the cooler months and this will vary depending on your climate — consider warm hats, coats, scarves, gloves or boots.

Some experiences may need a little modification to ensure the children are comfortable during winter. For example ensure the children are not sitting on the ground during play, provide chairs or cushion’s where appropriate. You can also add warm water to any water play rather than using cold water to make the temperature more comfortable.

Ensure the children have protective clothing such as smocks if required. Advise families that outdoor activities will continue during winter and to pack a spare set of clothes including socks as wet feet are common during winter. It can also be useful to keep a supply of old towels outside to dry equipment like slides and swings.

Finally and most importantly consider the health and safety of the children during outdoor winter play. Your yard checks may need to be more frequent and include checking for puddles and sweeping away where necessary. Also keep in mind that some equipment especially wooden climbing equipment may become slippery and unsafe when wet.

Thanks Kerry for asking about outdoor activities during winter.

---

**Study Logs**

As a reminder we ask all learners that are funded for their training to ensure you complete and update your study logs regularly. This allows trainers to keep a track of your progress with completing the written components of your training.

As part of your training contract, you are obliged to enter all study times and competencies you are working on into the study log. This is essential in ensuring you are receiving the allocated study hours under your training contract.

A reminder that the study log can be found in the front of your logbooks. For learners training online, your study logs can be found in your Advanced Diploma Hub. Please complete monthly beginning with study log one. Once study log one is full you can begin filling out study log 2 and so on. Completing study logs regularly will reduce time and confusion for you in the long run!

---

**Take advantage and save yourself time & money!**

**Why not send your assessments to us via e-mail:** 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

**Any technical support/queries can be made directly to:** tech@owfc.com.au

---

**Visit our website for all the latest news and updates**

www.owfc.com.au