



## Early Years Learning Framework

# PERSPECTIVES ON PEDAGOGY

The Early Years Learning Framework ‘...forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings, experience quality teaching and learning.’ (DEEWR, 2009)



‘Our image is of a child who possesses his or her own directions and the desire for knowledge and for life. A competent child. A possessor and builder of future, not only because children are the future but because they constantly reinterpret reality and continuously give it new meaning’.

— Carla Rinaldi, *Thinker in Residence*,  
Adelaide 2013

### PEDAGOGY

‘Early childhood educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning.’

— *Early Years Learning Framework*, 2009 p11

## Reflections on pedagogy

The *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008), the National Quality Framework, and *Belonging, Being & Becoming* (2009) all affirm the rights of the child and the need for quality early childhood education. Valuing children’s rights necessitates high quality pedagogy based on respect for children and their abilities. Reflection on our practice, our values, beliefs and the learning theories upon which we base our practices is critical to improving pedagogy.

Reflecting on children’s rights indicates a need for reflection on our pedagogy. In fact, *Reflect, Respect, Relate* (2008), *Belonging, Being & Becoming* (2009) and the *Educators’ guide to the Early Years Learning Framework* (2010) stipulate critical reflection and inquiry, collaboration and critical dialogue with peers as some of the basic tenets of improving practice.

What we believe about children and learning dictates how we teach. What we say we believe and what we actually do may not be the same. Choices and decisions about how to teach and what to teach are constantly being made by educators. These choices are based on our values and the image we hold of children and their learning. Children have the right to be active participants and decision makers, according to research that highlights new understandings about children and the way they learn. Our pedagogy must, therefore, take this into account. The way we do the things we do as early years educators is critical to ensuring we make the best of opportunities for children’s learning in our settings. Learning doesn’t happen the same way it always has and nor should teaching. “Learning does not proceed in a linear way, by progressive and predictable stages, but rather, is constructed in many directions”. (C Rinaldi, 2006). Therefore our pedagogy cannot follow a linear, predictable path. We must challenge our established patterns and rethink our approach to every child.

## What does pedagogy look like?

Educators making connections with children, families and each other through positive **relationships** and contextual **curriculum decision making** to guide their **teaching and learning**.

Pedagogy will look different in different contexts and rightly so. We will learn from and with children as researchers together. Our research, reflections, documentation and learning must shape our pedagogy. As social constructivists our practices are culturally and contextually situated and therefore change with each and every child and family.

**Inquiry:** What beliefs or theories drive your practice? What practical aspects of pedagogy are highly effective in your context? What aspects need re-thinking or changing?

Foremost in examining critical aspects of pedagogy are relationships.

### Nurturing, respectful relationships requires...

.....  
 'A child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an...emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always.'

(Bronfenbrenner in National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2004, quoted in RRR p12, 2008)  
 .....



- allowing children to '**just be**' – respecting children's timing and rhythms, valuing childhood as an important part of life, recognising the security in belonging and the excitement in becoming
- educators engaged in shared, sustained talking time – sitting and playing with children for extended periods...talking, laughing, listening, observing, **connecting** and learning together, both individually and in groups
- culturally competent educators with passion and **enthusiasm**
- **responsiveness** to children's rights, ideas, interests, strengths and culture
- children, parents, educators and communities working together as **partners** to maximise learning
- children **choosing** what they engage and play with, when and for how long
- **high expectations** – encouraging, supporting and challenging children's learning
- environments that **reflect** and **respect** attitudes and the joys, delights and culture of communities.

National Quality Standard  
 'Quality Area 1 provides a strong focus on enhancing children's learning and development through the pedagogical practices of educators.'

— Guide to the National Quality Standard, 2011 p20

### Curriculum decision making requires...

.....  
 'Curriculum in the early childhood setting...means all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.'  
 (EYLF, DEEWR, 2009, adapted from *Te Whariki*)  
 .....

- **collaborative decision making** – where parents, children and educators talk together, plan, reflect, evaluate and assess
- **rich environments** offering exciting possibilities and filled with wonder and curiosity
- planning for children to engage in **deep extended play**, by themselves, with peers and with educators
- **flexible routines** and structures, both outdoor and indoor which support play and learning
- an **inclusive**, dynamic, co-constructed learning environment
- an aesthetically pleasing environment with spaces that motivate and stimulate investigation and exploration and result in a sense of **security and wellbeing**
- educators to **make learning visible** through regular, ongoing, reflective pedagogical documentation that supports and improves learning and teaching and allows children, families and educators to revisit the learning and make the process of learning visible
- flexible, individualised planning that is **responsive** to children's interest, ideas, culture, strengths and rights.
- an understanding of the **theories** behind your decisions about the most effective way to enact the 'art of teaching' in your context, including an understanding of the implications of current research
- an understanding of individual children and a knowledge of the context of families and community
- an **understanding** of the **content** and **intent** of the *Early Years Learning Framework*, including the five outcomes, the Principles and the Practices
- a focus on dispositions, with the development of skills and concepts that are **relevant to each child**
- an **integration** of literacy and numeracy-specific skills to each child in an holistic way
- **intentional teaching** which maximises every child-initiated opportunity for learning and is specific to each child and the moment
- active promotion of learning through worthwhile and **challenging experiences**
- educators who **move flexibly** between situations and roles and utilise different strategies to engage with children
- **thoughtful documentation** of children's learning with analysis, reflection and future planning
- **encouraging creativity**, intuition and imagination in educators and children.

Reflect, Respect, Relate  
 '...provides a guide for educators to critically reflect on their pedagogy and relationships with children...'

— RRR, an overview, 2010

## Teaching and learning requires...

.....  
 'Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate, thoughtful and purposeful in their decisions and actions.'

(EYLF, DEEWR, 2009)

.....  
 'Learning is a natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities.'

(EYLF, DEEWR, 2009)



Quality pedagogy is **highly effective** when aspects of early years education are holistic, connected and:

- children's rights to quality learning drive the curriculum – where the child and the family have a strong, **authentic** voice
- ideas for experiences and learning opportunities arise from children and families' interests, curiosity, **culture**
- all learning is relevant and **meaningful** to children
- educators **listen** to children's desires and interests in collaborating on routines
- adult involvement is **purposeful**, considered and deliberate
- children develop curiosity, confidence, imagination and explore and have **fun** during extended periods of learning through play
- incidental and planned group times happen on many occasions, both inside and out and learning is supported at every opportunity
- flexible use of resources both natural and man-made offer a diverse range of **learning** possibilities
- **formative assessment** is critical in supporting children's learning
- pedagogical documentation includes **analysis, reflection** and plans for future learning
- children's behaviours are supported sensitively and in a **caring** manner with a focus on wellbeing and learning
- literacy and numeracy skills and concepts are developed and enhanced in an **holistic** manner
- technology is an **integrated** part of an holistic learning environment.

Quality pedagogy is **less effective** when aspects of early years education:

- are **independently planned** by the educator
- are **inflexible**...based on educators' agendas, or the weather
- expect all children to complete **the same** work/activity
- are solely based on **themes**
- have **irrelevant** or meaningless tasks, activities or experiences
- have **adults** directing or supervising involvement
- are **controlling of children's play** – which is brief rather than long and deep
- are focused on **talking rather than doing** – long, large group times with educators talking and where more time is spent on rules than learning
- regularly use worksheets, templates or **structured activities** with 'limited use' resources
- collect **scrapbooks** of children's artwork or the day's events or photos with no assessment, reflection or evaluation of learning
- **isolate children** from peers and role models from whom they could learn or think about their behaviour
- use discipline rather than support or guidance when responding to children's behaviour
- there is a **narrow focus on literacy or numeracy** that looks the same for all children
- use **technology as a reward or punishment**.



## References

- Guide to the National Quality Standard*, DEEWR, 2011
- Belonging, Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, DEEWR, 2009
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- Competent children at 14*, Wylie et al NZCER, 2006
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- Beyond quality in early childhood education and care; postmodern perspectives*, Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999
- Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*, Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002
- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEETYA December, 2008
- In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia *Listening, researching and learning.* C Rinaldi, 2006

The perspectives on pedagogy shared in this paper align with the intent of the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard.