



Thinking about...

Agency

Having agency means “being able to make choices and decisions to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 45).

As children develop a sense of agency they realise that they have the ability to make their own decisions and to control their own lives. A sense of agency is an important part of a strong sense of identity.

How do you support children to develop a sense of agency?

What opportunities are there in your setting for children to make meaningful decisions and choices about things that affect them?

What aspects of their day can children control themselves?



Thinking about...

Dispositions for learning

Dispositions are attitudes to life. They describe how we usually respond to situations. We might be shy or outgoing, enthusiastic or pessimistic, energetic or passive. All of these characteristics are dispositions.

The EYLF aims to encourage dispositions that promote learning such as curiosity, cooperation, creativity, persistence and enthusiasm.

How do you promote the development of these dispositions?

How do you encourage the children in your setting to be creative and curious?

How do you help children develop persistence and perseverance?

How do the children in your care become confident and involved learners?



Thinking about...

Pedagogy

Pedagogy describes the “art of teaching”. Our pedagogy is the way we work with children. It includes what we do, how we do it and how we think about what we do. Our pedagogy is usually based on a combination of our own beliefs, our experience and our professional knowledge about children and education.

The EYLF encourages us to reflect on our own pedagogy to make sure that we have carefully thought through what we are doing. We should know the reasons for what we do rather than simply doing something because “that is the way it has always been done”. By regularly reflecting on what we do we make sure that our pedagogy is up-to-date and effective.

Think about your own “pedagogy” or way of working with children. If you had to describe it to somebody else what would you say?

What would you highlight as the most important parts of what you do?



Thinking about...

Intentional teaching

Having an “intention” means having a purpose or reason for what we do. Intentional teaching is about having a purpose or reason for what we do in our work with children. When we are “intentional” we have an idea in mind about why we are doing something and about what we hope to achieve. Being “intentional” is important because when we have a purpose in mind we are much more likely to achieve what we set out to do.

Think about your own workplace. How much of what you do is “intentional”?

Think about how you are “intentional” - what are the reasons behind what you do?



Thinking about...

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is about understanding our own culture and background as well as being open and respectful to other cultures.

Being culturally competent helps us to recognise how important culture is to our beliefs and ways of doing things. It also helps us to understand the importance of culture to others.

Culture is central to our feelings of “being” and “belonging” and also to our sense of identity. If children are to feel welcome and are to develop a sense of identity then we need to think about how each of their cultures is visible in what we do.

Think about your own cultural background - how does it shape your beliefs and ways of doing things?

Where can children and families in your service find their culture reflected in the environment and interactions everyday?



Thinking about...

Transitions

Throughout childhood children make a number of transitions. Some transitions are big - starting school or child care or preschool for the first time. Some are smaller - maybe moving between rooms in a large service, or changing services. All are important points in a child's life.

Transitions offer opportunities and challenges. As educators our role is to help children (and their families) make these transitions as smoothly and successfully as possible.

Think about all the transitions that the children in your care will make. What will you do to help prepare them so that each transition is as smooth and comfortable as possible?

How will you include families in preparation for transitions?



Thinking about...

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the temporary structure used to support a building as it is being built or repaired. It helps to hold everything together until the building is able to stand by itself.

In education, scaffolding refers to the way in which educators help to support and extend children's learning. Like scaffolding on a building, our involvement and careful questioning and suggestions, can help to support children's learning while it is taking place. With our support children's learning often becomes richer and more valuable than it would otherwise.

Think about the ways in which you support (or “scaffold”) children's learning - how do you know when to involve yourself, to ask a question or make a comment or suggestion, and when to just watch?

How do you ask questions or make suggestions that encourage children's thinking rather than shutting it down?



Thinking about...

Sustained shared thinking

When children have the chance to investigate and solve problems with each other and with supportive adults their thinking and learning becomes deeper and more complex. This process of working together is “sustained shared thinking”. Research on “sustained shared thinking” shows that learning is most effective when:

- it is a shared experience;
- educators become involved in children’s play to “scaffold” or support learning; and
- children have long periods of time in which to get deeply involved in play and problem solving.

Think about the opportunities for children in your service to become involved in sustained shared thinking - where and when do they happen?

How often are you able to become deeply involved in shared problem solving with a child or group of children? How do you involve yourself without taking over?



Thinking about...

Resilience

Being resilient - having the ability to bounce back from stresses and disappointments - is one of the best predictors of children's later success in life. Resilience is an important part of identity (EYLF Outcome 1) and wellbeing (EYLF Outcome 3) and enables children to persevere and succeed in the face of difficulties.

Important characteristics such as resilience are not easily “teachable”. They are usually built over time through many experiences and through the relationships that children develop with caring educators.

Think about the things that you do that help children to become resilient - how do you encourage perseverance, positivity and a sense of self-belief?

How do the relationships you have with children help them to become more resilient?



Thinking about...

Curriculum

The EYLF defines curriculum as everything that happens in a day. It is “all the interactions, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development”. (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.9)

Such a broad definition makes us think about “curriculum” differently. It is about more than just the experiences or activities we plan for or deliberately set up. Routines and everyday events can offer opportunities for learning that are just as valuable as activities provided at other times of the day.

Think about the “curriculum” in your service - what does it include?

Is it about more than just pre-planned activities?

How do you make use of routines like mealtimes as learning experiences?

How do you include interactions and relationships in your curriculum planning?



Thinking about...

Inclusion

“Inclusion” aims to make everyone feel welcome, valued and accepted, regardless of their age, culture, background or ability.

Being inclusive means making sure that everyone is treated fairly and that no one is left out. Sometimes the practice of inclusion is used to refer specifically to how we work with children with additional needs. In the EYLF it is used in relation to how we work with all children and is closely linked to the idea of “belonging”.

It is hard to feel you belong if you aren't included.

Think about what inclusion means for you - how do you make sure no one is left out?

How do you respond to a situation or behaviour that is unfair?

How do you help children to recognise what is fair and what is not?

How do you support children to respond to the values, needs and abilities of others?



Thinking about...

Reflective practice

Being reflective is one of the basic principles that underpins the EYLF. Reflection involves asking ourselves questions about what we do and how we do it. It means:

- being honest with yourself about what you do;
- being open to different ways of doing things; and
- being willing to change how you do things.

Without reflection we tend to keep doing things in the same way that we have always done them. Reflective practice helps us to know what we do and why we do it. It helps us to make thoughtful decisions that are in the best interests of children and families.

How do you engage in reflective practice in your workplace?

How do you make sure there is time to have conversations with colleagues?

How does everyone contribute to reflection?



Thinking about...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

Early childhood education has a critical role to play in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to feel culturally secure in the setting.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children early childhood education is a crucial first step to educational success. For non-Aboriginal children early childhood education offers an opportunity to engage with and begin to understand the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and perspectives to Australian society as a whole.

Think about how aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge are included in what you do?

How do you help all of the children you work with to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and ways of doing things?

If you work directly with Aboriginal or Torres Strait children, how do you create a sense of belonging and welcome for them, their families and their community?



Talking about...

Belonging

“Experiencing belonging - knowing where and with whom you belong - is integral to human existence.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.7)

Think about somewhere where you feel a strong sense of belonging. Share with someone else what that feels like. What is it that makes you feel you belong?

How important is that feeling to you?

How can you help to bring that same sense of belonging into your work with children?



Talking about...

Being

“Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world.”
(*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.7)

The EYLF strongly supports children's right to “be”. Being is about having the time and space in which to lose yourself in what you are doing. It is about allowing children the time to be themselves rather than always hurrying them into the future.

Talk about where and when children have opportunities for “being” in your service. How do you balance the necessary structure and routine of your day with the unstructured nature of “being”?

What could you do to allow more time for “being” within the day?



Talking about...

Becoming

The idea of “becoming” asks us to think about each child’s future. Young children have their entire lives before them. What happens in the early childhood years helps to shape who they become. When we recognise and nurture children’s potential we support their future success and happiness.

Talk about how becoming is nurtured in your service. What do you do that helps each child to develop and realise their potential?

How do the ideas of belonging, being and becoming fit together?

What role does belonging play in becoming?

How do you maintain each child’s chance to “be” while also focussing on their future?



Talking about...

Relationships

“When children feel safe, secure and supported they grow in confidence to explore and learn.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.20)

Safe, secure and supportive relationships are essential to children's learning.

Talk with a colleague about how you support the relationships of the children you work with. How do you “plan” for relationships to happen?

What do you do to encourage the formation of friendships?

How do you help children develop the social skills they need to be part of a group?



Talking about...

Assessment

Assessment is an essential tool to help us plan for and support children's learning.

Through careful and sensitive assessment we:

- can collect the information we need to plan effectively;
- are able to talk to families about their child's learning;
- can see how children are progressing and decide how we can best support their progress; and
- are able to evaluate whether what we are doing is working or not.

Talk about how you assess children's progress and learning. What information do you collect and how? How do you make sure that assessment is a positive process? How do you measure the "distance travelled" by each child? How does the way you assess children's learning link to the EYLF's learning outcomes?



Talking about...

Learning outcomes

Working with the learning outcomes requires us to plan for children's ongoing learning and development. We need to think about how we build connections between children's experiences so that learning is consolidated over time.

Identity, wellbeing, connection, attitudes to learning and effective communication will all be enhanced and developed through many rich experiences over time.

Discuss how you plan for learning over time.

Do you do long term as well as short term planning? How does what you do link from week-to-week and month-to-month? How do you plan for children's learning in relation to the outcomes? How do you measure that outcomes are being achieved?



Talking about...

Documentation

Documentation is the record we keep of children's learning. By documenting what children are doing we are better able to assess, evaluate and plan for future learning. The information we record in our documentation should help to inform our planning about what to do next. Documentation that is clear and easy to understand is also an important way to share information with families and others about children's progress.

Documentation can include observations and analysis of children's learning, photographs or samples of their work, and any other records that help to capture an individual child's progress.

How do you currently document children's learning? How do you make sure that the information you collect is relevant and meaningful? How does it help you to assess children's learning and plan what to do next? What opportunities are there to discuss and share documentation as a team? And with families?

My Family



Kenne's children
from Harry and Isabelle
the dog!



Talking about...

Identity

A strong sense of identity plays a vital role in children's learning. When children know who they are, and are confident in themselves, they are better able to learn and build relationships with others. Identity is complex though. Everyone's sense of identity is different, and what identity looks like at different ages also varies.

Talk about what a sense of identity means to you and what it looks like. How would you observe a strong sense of identity in a child?

Thinking about the age groups that you work with, talk about what identity might look like at different ages - in a baby? a toddler? a five year old?



Talking about...

Wellbeing

“Wellbeing includes good physical health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction and successful social functioning... A strong sense of wellbeing provides children with confidence and optimism which maximise their learning potential.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.30)

Wellbeing is about feeling good about yourself. It is closely linked to a sense of identity and to feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. It also includes physical fitness, nutrition and health - all of which make a big contribution to how we feel.

How does your program encourage a sense of wellbeing in children?

As a team talk about how children learn to feel good about themselves and their abilities.

How does your program promote each child's physical development and awareness of healthy lifestyles?



Talking about...

Play-based learning

Through play children:

- make sense of their world;
- develop and explore their own interests and ideas;
- develop curiosity, creativity and problem solving skills; and
- build relationships, social skills and language.

Educators play a vital role in supporting play and learning. Children's play is enriched when educators are directly involved. By engaging in play educators are able to support, guide and extend children's play and learning as it happens.

Think about your role as an educator and how you involve yourself in children's play. Discuss the value of educator involvement in play. What strategies work best to extend children's play and encourage more complex thinking and learning? How do you participate in and guide children's play without taking over? Can you share the value of play with families?



Talking about...

Diversity

“Respecting diversity means... valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.13)

To create a true sense of belonging we need to show respect and understanding for each child, and each family's unique background, culture and beliefs.

By welcoming and including diversity we help to make each child and family member feel part of our service. We also model that diversity is something to be valued.

Think about the children and families that you work with. How do you make families feel welcome and accepted?

How do children and families find something of themselves reflected in what you do?

How does what you do model respect for diversity to others, particularly children?



Talking about...

Partnerships with families

“Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children’s learning.” (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p.9)

Partnerships with families begin with strong relationships. Sharing something meaningful about a child’s day is a powerful way to make a connection. Families already have their child’s best interests at heart. When they can see that we do as well it helps to build trust and respect.

Reflect on how you share information with families. As a team discuss the kind of information you provide and how meaningful it is.

Does it give an insight into a child’s learning or convey what was special about the day?

Does it show that you are interested in, and knowledgeable about each child?

Does it connect with families?