Early Years
Curriculum Guidelines

Acknowledgments

Trial version and final edition

The principal writers of the final version of the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (EYCG)* and associated materials were Patricia Connell, Anthony Shearer and Trudi Tobin, in consultation with Carolyn Harrod.

This document was based on the trial version of the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*. Writers for this document and associated materials were: Patricia Connell, Elizabeth Kable, Tracey Linnane, Anthony Shearer and Jenny Taylor, with support from Judy Forster, Suzette Holm, Terry O'Brien and Donna Torr. Carolyn Harrod was the manager for this project.

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Publishing and graphics

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The vibrant artwork throughout the document was contributed by prep children from:

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Eight Mile Plains State School, Brisbane
Inala State School, Brisbane
Vienna Woods State School, Brisbane.

The photographs of prep classes featured in the EYCG come from:

Arundel State School, Gold Coast
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Camp Hill Infants State School, Brisbane
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Inala State School, Brisbane
Mitchelton State School, Brisbane
St Saviour's Catholic Primary School, Toowoomba
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Wyreema State School, Wyreema.

The photograph of the Badu Island dancers was taken by Brendan Cupitt. All other photographs were taken by the prep teachers and the QSA early years project team.

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Foreword

In 2007, a Preparatory Year will be introduced into Queensland schools. The *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (EYCG)* has been developed specifically for use in the Preparatory Year. It provides a framework for continuity of learning through the early childhood phase of schooling.

It is widely accepted that the early years of learning are among the most significant periods of growth for children. Experiences during this time not only affect cognitive, social and physical development, but deeply influence dispositions to learning and children's views of themselves as learners.

With this in mind, the *EYCG* is based on current research into young children's learning. The following six factors associated with preparedness for school and later success have been identified from this research:

- social and emotional competence with a focus on social learning and independence
- health and physical wellbeing, particularly in making healthy choices and gross- and fine-motor development
- language development and communication, focusing on oral language and early literacy
- early mathematical understandings with emphasis on early numeracy
- active learning processes with a focus on thinking, investigating, and imagining and responding
- positive dispositions to learning.

These factors for success provide the framework for the *EYCG* curriculum content.

The *EYCG* invites teachers and administrators to view children as capable learners who bring knowledges and experiences into prep settings. The teaching and learning approach emphasises the importance of:

- building on prior learning
- providing opportunities for children to learn through all sensory pathways.

It recognises the vital role in children's brain development of play-based problem-solving with other children, and the role of adults in supporting, scaffolding, facilitating and monitoring learning.

The document highlights the important role that teachers play as they work with children and other partners in making curriculum decisions. In preparatory settings, curriculum decision making involves four non-linear, interactive processes — *planning, interacting, monitoring & assessing* and *reflecting.* These are used as organisers throughout the *EYCG.*

The external evaluation noted that the *EYCG* framework guided teachers to develop programs that were highly successful in promoting children's learning. Teachers will find the *EYCG* a valuable resource that affirms their effective practices, and challenges them to explore different ways of looking at the early years curriculum.

The QSA would like to thank the many people involved in the development of the *EYCG.* We particularly appreciate the highly professional contributions from preparatory teachers and school communities.

Kim Bannikoff
Director, Queensland Studies Authority
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Introduction

Purpose of the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*

The *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (EYCG)* provides teachers with a framework for interacting with children, and planning, assessing and reflecting on an effective Preparatory Year curriculum. The *EYCG* supports teachers to integrate learning, teaching and assessment, and promote continuity in children's learning by:

- emphasising the contribution of early childhood education to lifelong learning
- describing children as initiators who engage in learning experiences in a range of contexts
- illustrating how partnerships among children, parents and colleagues enhance continuity in children's learning
- guiding teachers in making links between prior, current and future learning
- illustrating developmentally, socially and culturally responsive learning opportunities that acknowledge equity and diversity
- establishing essential connections between the *EYCG* and the Years 1 to 10 key learning area (KLA) syllabuses
- providing a mechanism for passing on information about each child's learning and development
- providing children with a foundation for successful learning.

This curriculum recognises how significant high-quality early childhood education programs can be in children's lives. The *EYCG* reflects extensive research showing that early childhood programs encouraging active learning, problem solving, effective communication, creativity, social adjustment and participation benefit children's long-term success in education and citizenship.

The curriculum recognises the diversity of experiences and relationships that shape children's lives. Queensland is a highly decentralised state where children may experience life as members of urban, rural, remote and/or mobile local communities. Within these communities, many children also experience changing patterns of family life and multiple care experiences, bringing them into contact with various social and cultural practices. In addition, local communities are situated within wider communities and shaped by global trends. The preparatory curriculum acknowledges that, by the time children enter the Preparatory Year, their development will already be influenced by many complex and interacting factors.

Promoting continuities through the Preparatory Year

An important aim of the Preparatory Year is to build continuity between children's prior experiences and their future learning in schools. Before starting the Preparatory Year, children live and learn in a range of overlapping, socially and culturally diverse settings. Many factors within these settings interact to influence how children see themselves, their ways of responding to the world and how they interact and build relationships. These factors include:

- linguistic backgrounds — types and styles of English, accents and dialects, languages other than English, Indigenous languages
- gender
- Indigenous or ethnic identities
- economic situations
- family structures
- lifestyle, family and parenting practices
- experiences with literacy and numeracy practices within the home and community
- experiences in childcare, kindergarten and preschool
- geographical situations, including mobility and isolation
- abilities and disabilities
- learning styles and learning preferences
- religious practices and spiritual beliefs.

Other early experiences also shape who children become and how they learn, including:

- experience, or lack of it, with other generations — siblings, cousins and/or grandparents
- expectations of behaviour within familiar social and cultural settings
- family attitudes to schooling
- interactions within the family and community, related to ways of thinking and approaches to learning
- learning through distance education programs
- separation from one or more parents/carers, or changes in family situations
- extended periods of illness or other health concerns
- participation in interest groups, such as dance or sport clubs
- experience with the media and popular culture
- exposure to information and communication technology.

Each child's knowledge about the world, themselves and other people is developed through these diverse experiences. This knowledge allows children to participate as members of familiar communities, and they draw on it to help them manage transitions into new contexts such as the Preparatory Year. However, this knowledge does not always help children to make sense of expectations and practices in new educational contexts.

As children make the transition into preparatory settings, and later as they move through the early phase of schooling, they need effective support. Teachers can help to establish continuities between children's diverse prior learning experiences and future learning by:

- building continuities through curriculum and teaching practices
- establishing positive relationships
- valuing and expanding children's diverse social and cultural understandings
- managing transition processes between settings.

Building continuity through curriculum and teaching practices

Curriculum continuities establish links for children between their prior, current and future learning. In preparatory settings it is particularly important to recognise and build on children's prior learning in other settings.

Research shows that a curriculum, which broadens children's learning by providing a broadly based, integrated program, is most likely to provide foundations for success in later learning. The following factors for success in school learning are drawn from the research:

- social and emotional competence, with a focus on social and personal learning
- health and physical wellbeing, particularly in making healthy choices, and gross- and fine-motor development
- language development and communication, focusing on oral language and early literacy
- early mathematical understandings, with emphasis on early numeracy
- active learning processes with a focus on thinking, investigating, and imagining and responding
- positive dispositions to learning.

These factors have been used to organise the early learning areas. They provide a useful framework for curriculum continuity in the early phase of learning.

The early learning areas are:

- **Social & personal learning**
- **Health & physical learning**
- **Language learning & communication**
- **Early mathematical understandings**
- **Active learning processes**

The early learning areas promote continuity between curriculum programs in the pre-compulsory and compulsory years of schooling by providing links with children's prior learning and the curriculum described in the KLA syllabuses. The early learning areas are used to develop a balanced, integrated curriculum for young children. A detailed description of these learning areas is provided

later in this document, in the section "Exploring what children learn", in which Table 8 shows the major links between the early learning areas and the KLAs.

As children explore their understandings and capabilities, they are constructing their dispositions. Dispositions may be described as relatively enduring habits of mind and action, and tendencies to respond to situations in characteristic ways. Teachers have an important role in encouraging children to develop constructive dispositions, such as a willingness to persevere, to engage with learning and to negotiate with others. This can be best achieved through developing integrated learning experiences drawn from the early learning areas. Children's individual positive dispositions to learning and to themselves as learners are important for success in school and in future work.

The *EYCG* includes a section on monitoring and assessing children's learning and development in relation to the early learning areas. The section includes advice on using an early learning record that teachers can use to describe children's learning as they make the transition from the preparatory setting to Year 1.

Another important aspect of continuity is continuity of teaching practices that include collaborative planning, providing opportunities for choice and active learning experiences. Effective teaching practices are discussed in the section "Creating contexts for learning and development" and the chapter "Perspectives that shape the early years curriculum". Explicit advice about the types of interactions teachers can use to support children's learning is also provided in the "Learning statement overviews" chapter.

Building continuity through establishing positive relationships

Teachers play an important role in establishing and maintaining a community of active, cooperative learners in preparatory settings. Strong relationships are essential for this, and they can be established through mutual interest, trust and care for each other.

To develop these relationships, teachers seek to understand children's experiences and respond to them as individuals. Teachers also need to reflect on how their own social and cultural backgrounds influence how they respond to children and their families. Further information on social and cultural factors can be found in the sections "Understanding children" and "Building partnerships".

Building a community of learners is a collaborative endeavour that is enhanced by communication between partners, including children, parents, teachers, administrators, colleagues, other professionals and respected community members such as Elders. Partners collaborate to ensure that children are supported as they make the transition into a new learning setting. Transitions are most successful when:

- positive relationships are established between children, parents, carers and colleagues
- children are viewed as capable
- an environment is established in which children and parents/carers feel physically, emotionally and intellectually safe

- diversity is acknowledged and valued
- opportunities for dialogue are provided, enabling people to share information
- transition processes are negotiated, and flexible options are provided that cater for the diverse needs and expectations of children and families
- partners' different points of view and expectations about education, learning and transitions are understood and respected
- a wide range of partners are involved, such as learning support and other specialist staff, teacher aides, administrators and community members, as well as children, teachers and parents.

Building continuity by valuing and expanding children's diverse social and cultural understandings

Building continuity means providing an environment that supports children to gradually learn the ways of interacting and behaving in the school setting. These are often particular social and cultural practices that are new to children. Teachers may need to explicitly teach the social and cultural practices that are used in their classroom and school. This may involve:

- recognising that for some children, the school culture and the home culture may be very different
- recognising and valuing the children's existing social and cultural understandings and practices
- clearly explaining the rules, expectations, and linguistic and cultural practices associated with being successful learners in the new setting
- ensuring that there is continuity in the curriculum, and in ways of interacting and learning, as children move from prior care and education into preparatory settings and through school
- developing strategies to assist children as they adjust to new settings
- assisting children to build relationships with staff and peers in the new setting
- clearly explaining the processes for interacting in groups that are particular to their school communities.

Building continuity by managing transition processes between settings

A variety of transition processes can be developed to help children and families move effortlessly from home situations into preparatory settings and later into early primary settings. These processes need to be funded, planned and evaluated to ensure they promote continuity. Such transition processes incorporate opportunities for:

- children and their families to meet teaching staff before the first day
- small groups of children to meet, take part in classroom routines and experiences, and become familiar with the classroom learning environment
- parents and carers to meet, get to know each other and build networks

- staff from different settings (such as care and early educational contexts, preparatory and schooling) to meet and visit each other's workplaces, plan transitions, discuss curriculum continuity, including continuity of teaching practice, work together in professional learning experiences and build professional networks
- parents and carers to regularly visit the classroom, see their children engaging in contexts, and discuss topics of interest
- teachers, parents and carers to pass on information about children's learning and development.

Successful transition processes are flexible and responsive to the changing needs and interests of participants — for example, adjusting programs to allow working or isolated families to visit classrooms when convenient. Transition processes respect individual community differences and are built upon trust. It is important for parents and carers to feel that their ideas, views and needs are valued, respected and taken into account when transition processes are planned.

Perceived differences between pre-compulsory and compulsory educational settings often give rise to concerns about whether children will be "ready" for compulsory schooling. Children and families often construct assumptions and expectations about what school is like. Schools are often viewed as places where children work at desks, interact with larger groups of children, are expected to be in particular places at set times, and need to remember different sets of rules for classroom activities, group experiences, lunch breaks and specialist lessons. However, research has shown that, throughout the early phase of schooling, children learn more effectively in an environment that encourages movement, investigation, discussion, outdoor learning and flexible learning contexts.

Transitions between pre-compulsory and compulsory schooling settings are more successful when they provide continuity of experiences and offer flexible, child-responsive curriculums that:

- reflect current understandings about children and how they learn and develop
- use the information provided by previous teachers about individual children's learning and development
- build effective partnerships to support learning
- provide flexible learning environments
- ensure children learn in a range of learning contexts including play, real-life situations, investigations, transitions and routines, and focused learning and teaching
- provide integrated learning experiences that allow children to demonstrate outcomes and explore core content identified in the KLA syllabuses.

Children's experiences with transitions have an impact on their learning and development as well as their adjustment to new situations in the future. Facilitating successful transitions by building continuities is, therefore, an important focus for the Preparatory Year.

Figure 1: Key organisers

These key organisers, referred to throughout the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*, provide a framework to guide teachers as they make curriculum decisions and scaffold children's learning.

Five *early learning* areas
- Social & personal learning
- Health & physical learning
- Language learning & communication
- Early mathematical understandings
- Active learning processes

Five *contexts for learning*
- Play
- Real-life situations
- Investigations
- Routines and transitions
- Focused learning and teaching

Four *interactive processes for curriculum decision making*
- Planning
- Interacting
- Monitoring & assessing
- Reflecting

Five *key components*
- Understanding children
- Building partnerships
- Flexible learning environments
- Contexts for learning
- What children learn

Four *phases that describe children's learning and development*
- Becoming aware
- Exploring
- Making connections
- Applying

Perspectives that shape the
early years curriculum

This chapter outlines those perspectives that inform the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines* (*EYCG*). It discusses:

- perspectives on children, learning and teaching

- perspectives on teachers and teaching

- principles for practice.

Perspectives on children, learning and teaching

There have been many views of children, their role in society and appropriate teaching methods throughout history. In the past, children have been considered "little adults", whose role it is to learn how to assist adults in their work. They have also been considered "innocents" to be nurtured, or "blank slates" to be filled with knowledge by adults. This curriculum has drawn on the most significant researchers of the 20th century whose theories have been tested in the field of early childhood education — Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, and the schools of thought of the reconceptualists and brain researchers. A table comparing the influence of the researchers on views of children, teachers and teaching can be found in Appendix 1.

The *EYCG* is fundamentally based on a view of children as capable young people who have been learning since birth. They are able to take part purposefully in, and contribute to, their learning. Their ideas and diverse experiences enrich learning programs.

Children learn best when they:

- make connections between their diverse prior experiences and learning in the school setting
- participate in making decisions
- make choices and contribute to learning experiences
- share their opinions and diverse experiences
- discuss their learning
- learn in a responsive and supportive social environment
- learn through multi-sensory experiences
- participate actively in experiences that engage them emotionally, physically, cognitively and socially.

> *Children are strong, rich and capable. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, negotiating with everything their environment brings to them.*
> **Lella Gandini**

Children's construction of knowledge

The *EYCG* describes knowledge as the understandings, capabilities and dispositions that children construct before and after they come to school. Construction of knowledge takes place as part of the social and cultural interactions between children and teachers, family, friends and others. In this way knowledge can be seen as a social and cultural construct that is based on individual and group experiences.

Children come to school with diverse understandings, capabilities and dispositions because they have different social and cultural experiences prior to starting school. This diversity of knowledges provides a rich and valuable starting point for learning in school.

Teachers help children build deeper knowledge by assisting them to make links between the knowledges valued at home and the knowledges valued at school. Children also have a role to play in making these links by participating in decision-making processes that identify starting points for learning and describe directions which learning may take. Providing opportunities for children to be part of this decision making gives them some "agency" in their own learning, while listening to their ideas gives them a "voice". Teachers support and encourage children as they learn by building on their prior knowledges, helping them to make links between their prior knowledges and new learning, and making implicit knowledge explicit.

Engaging children in learning involves:

- recognising and building on children's diverse backgrounds and experiences, and catering for these by engaging children in curriculum decision making
- reflecting on the possible social or cultural biases of teachers' own knowledges
- understanding how the sociocultural practices operating in the classroom advantage or disadvantage children, groups of children and other partners
- understanding how children learn and the importance of building interconnectedness between learning experiences
- creating a learning environment characterised by positive relationships among all partners in the learning community
- engaging children in experiences of increasing complexity that lead to deep understandings.

Perspectives on teachers and teaching

There have been many perspectives on teachers and teaching throughout history. A prevailing view has been that of teachers as transmitters of knowledge, with knowledge viewed as a product that children receive. The *EYCG* promotes the perspective of teachers in the early phase of learning as educators whose intention is to engage children in learning how to learn about the desired goals of the curriculum. As educators, teachers:

- understand children
- build partnerships through collaboration
- co-construct flexible learning environments
- create learning experiences with children
- make curriculum decisions through planning, interacting, reflecting, and monitoring and assessing.

As educators in a preparatory setting, teachers play diverse and interconnected roles. Table 1 looks at these key roles in more detail.

Table 1: Educator roles and teaching strategies

Educator roles	Associated roles	Responsive teaching strategies
Builder of relationships	Communicator Mediator Mentor Networker Partner Supporter	Fostering and nurturing relationships. Conversing openly and warmly with children and other partners. Communicating understandings, goals and expectations with partners. Working together with partners to establish shared understandings. Respecting, valuing and encouraging diversity of thinking, opinions and ideas. Mediating in situations that require conflict resolution. Supporting children, parents/carers and colleagues in the care and teaching of young children. Involving families in the learning program. Sharing information about children's learning. Contacting community organisations, agencies, and specialists e.g. health, education.
Scaffolder of children's learning	Collaborator Facilitator Listener Modeller Problem solver Prompter Provoker Questioner Researcher Strategist	Facilitating children's learning. Investigating alternative ways of knowing, thinking and doing. Making learning explicit and relevant. Building connections to link children's prior learning and new learning. Listening carefully and responding deliberately to children's conversations, enquiries, questions and theories about the world. Collaborating as a learner partner. Using purposeful interactions to extend and build on children's understandings, capabilities and dispositions. Challenging children's ways of knowing, thinking and doing to develop deep understandings. Discussing with children the outcomes of their choices. Extending children's thinking to develop deep understandings. Reducing support as a child becomes more independent with new learning.
Planner for learning	Action researcher Co-constructor Collaborator Communicator Creator Documenter Evaluator Interpreter Listener Negotiator Observer Partner Practitioner Recorder Reflector	Maintaining high expectations of all children. Planning collaboratively with children as part of curriculum decision making. Planning a responsive curriculum that reflects the needs and interests of the local community. Ensuring a balance of child-initiated, teacher-initiated, collaboratively planned and spontaneous learning experiences. Recording key decisions, intentions, actions and results of those actions. Recording the curriculum areas addressed. Using a range of powerful learning contexts including play, real-life experiences, investigations, focused learning and teaching, routines and transitions. Establishing sensory-rich outdoor and indoor learning environments. Organising learning environments that are dynamic and responsive to children's needs and interests. Considering holistic development of children when planning and creating integrated learning experiences. Planning and creating varied, stimulating, challenging and motivating learning experiences based on the monitoring and assessing of children's learning. Planning for ways to collect evidence about children's learning. Documenting, assessing and interpreting children's learning.
Teacher as learner	Critic Investigator Lifelong learner Professional partner Reflector Researcher Theorist	Building on understandings by keeping informed about current educational issues about the early phase of schooling. Identifying issues and topics for investigation. Exploring and using diverse and alternative ways of knowing, thinking and doing. Participating in professional partnerships to share information and consider ideas. Discussing views of teaching and children's learning and development. Considering a range of theories and approaches when making curriculum decisions. Critiquing own assumptions, beliefs and values about teaching and learning. Recognising and reflecting on "multiple lenses" we wear that influence curriculum decision making. Questioning and challenging unfair, unjust or inequitable practices. Considering own disposition towards teaching and learning. Using a range of strategies to assist meaning-making about teaching and learning. Reflecting critically on, testing, modifying and improving teaching practices.

Principles for practice
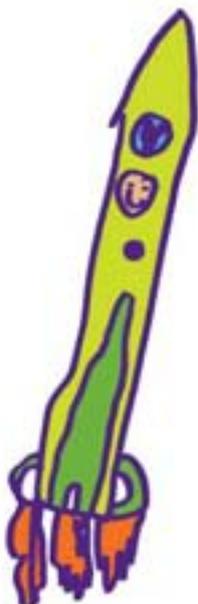
The following set of principles provides a framework for practice that guides teachers as they make curriculum decisions and scaffold children's learning in the early phase of learning.

1.   Children are capable and competent and have been learning since birth.

Recognising children as competent learners means recognising what they know and can do, and using that as a starting point for new learning. Teachers support and encourage children as they learn by building on their prior knowledges, making links to new learning and making implicit knowledge explicit.

2.   Children build deep understandings when they learn through all senses and are offered choice in their learning experiences.

Children develop complex cognitive structures when they take in information through all senses including touch, kinaesthetic (body movement) and smell. Children engage more enthusiastically in learning when they are able to participate in decision making about learning experiences.

3.   Children learn best through interactions, active exploration, experimentation and by representing their learning through a variety of modes.

Children actively construct knowledge of their world by investigating new materials, ideas and events. Therefore they learn most effectively through interactions with people, concrete objects, ideas and representations, which invite attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration, experimentation and imagination. Teachers support children by encouraging them to represent their learning in a range of modes such as movement, painting, drawing, speaking, writing, construction and socio-dramatic play.

4.   Children's positive dispositions to learning, and to themselves as learners, are essential for success in school and beyond.

Teachers have an important role in encouraging children to develop dispositions such as perseverance and a willingness to engage in new learning. Children develop dispositions such as these when they receive constructive feedback as they question, investigate, analyse, innovate and interact with others. Positive dispositions towards learning are also fostered by providing learning experiences that are relevant to children's lives and interests.

5. Children learn best in environments where there are supportive relationships among all partners in the learning community.

Teachers develop supportive partnerships with children, families and carers, communities and professional colleagues by:

- building a sense of child agency by collaboratively planning with children
- involving families in supporting children's learning through sharing information and allowing families to contribute their own knowledges and perspectives
- working with specialist personnel, teachers, teacher aides, administrators and support staff to provide quality learning programs.

6. Early childhood programs are most effective when they recognise, value and build upon the cultural and social experiences of children.

Children have diverse experiences in homes, communities, early care and educational settings. Teachers collaborate with partners to ensure that learning environments reflect this diversity of cultural and social experiences as well as shared ideas, values, beliefs, and identities. Learning programs therefore acknowledge or build on children's diverse ways of thinking, knowing and behaving.

7. Building continuity of learning as children move to and through school provides foundations for their future success.

Children successfully manage transitions into school and through school when teachers establish continuities between children's prior, current and future learning. Schools plan transition processes that engage children, families and the school community.

8. Assessment of young children is an integral part of the learning–teaching process and is not a separate activity.

Assessment involves the purposeful, systematic and ongoing monitoring of children's learning. The information gathered is used for future planning and to make judgments about a child's learning and development. Children's everyday learning experiences offer rich opportunities for gathering evidence of learning. It is important that children have opportunities to participate in their assessment and to demonstrate understandings, capabilities and dispositions towards learning in a full range of learning contexts. In the early years, "point–in-time" assessment external to learning contexts is inappropriate, because young children's performance can be adversely affected by unfamiliar language and misunderstandings about the purpose of the assessment.

Key components of an effective early years curriculum

This chapter discusses five key components that are used for curriculum decision making in the early phase of learning:

- Understanding children
- Building partnerships
- Establishing flexible learning environments
- Creating contexts for learning and development
- Exploring what children learn.

The key components are introduced in Table 2, and explored in detail in the rest of this chapter. The next chapter discusses the decision-making processes.

Table 2: Five key components used for curriculum decision making

Key component	Brief description
Understanding children	Discusses characteristics of young learners, and ways that teachers develop understandings about children's prior experiences and respond to diversity, including: • understanding children's prior experiences • understanding children's learning • understanding learning and development in educational contexts • building understandings about children.
Building partnerships	Describes key partnerships and the teacher's role in building and maintaining partnerships. Partnerships in the preparatory program involve: • children • families and carers • communities • other professionals.
Establishing flexible learning environments	Describes key aspects of flexible learning environments, including: • physical environments • social environments • temporal environments.
Creating contexts for learning and development	Explores decision making about contexts, and identifies five important contexts for learning: • play • real-life situations • investigations • routines and transitions • focused learning and teaching.
Exploring what children learn	Describes the understandings, capabilities and dispositions developed during the Preparatory Year, and gives some examples of the links between them. The early learning areas are: • Social & personal learning • Health & physical learning • Language learning & communication • Early mathematical understandings • Active learning processes.

Note: Each section finishes with questions to stimulate critical reflection.

Figure 2: The interactive nature of curriculum decision making
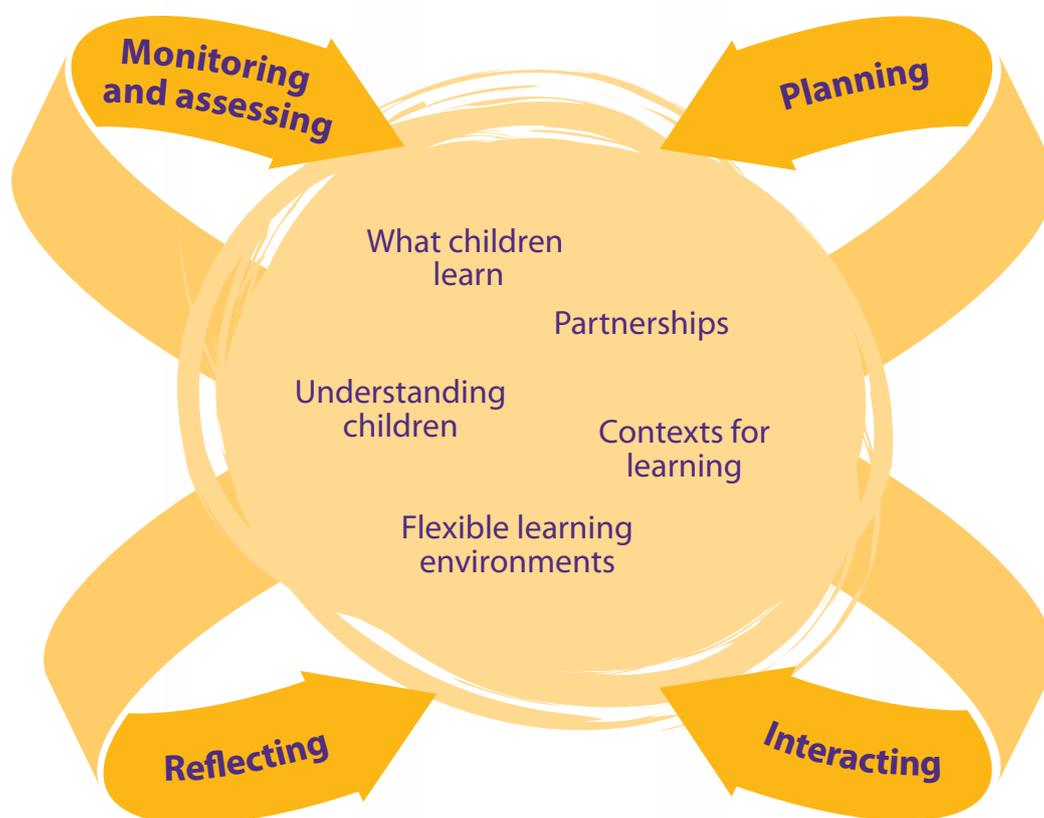
Decision making in relation to the five key components needs to be dynamic, non-linear, integrated and child responsive. The chapter "Exploring decision-making processes" explains how teachers can use the five key components as they plan, interact, reflect, and monitor and assess.

Understanding children

In the early years, teachers provide children with a holistic curriculum through which they have the opportunity to learn and develop personal and shared understandings, capabilities and dispositions, as well as learning about the domains of knowledge. The holistic curriculum is broadly based, and engages children with learning as a whole, rather than as separate pieces or disciplines. An understanding of how children learn and develop is central to interpreting their responses to learning experiences. Teachers can then respond to each child's interests, ideas and concerns, and provide support for further learning.

For teachers, the essential aspects of understanding children are:

- understanding children's prior experiences
- understanding children's learning
- understanding learning and development in educational contexts
- building understandings about children
- critically reflecting on understandings of children.

Understanding children's prior experiences

When children enter an educational context at four or five years of age, teachers often notice considerable variation in the ways that they respond to the new context.

Before participating in a Preparatory Year program, children will have been part of a variety of social, cultural and learning contexts, such as their own homes and those of relatives and friends, shops, playgrounds and perhaps family daycare. In these contexts, children are engaged in ways of knowing, behaving and communicating that are particular to their homes and communities.

Many children, but not all, will also have been part of childcare, kindergarten and preschool settings. The prior experiences of some of the children will be similar to those in the preparatory context — for others, many of the educational experiences will be new.

It is helpful to consider possible differences in children's prior experiences when interpreting their initial responses to experiences in the new context. Some differences may lie in:

- children's home language and cultural background
- expectations of children at home
- children's prior play experiences
- children's experiences in care and educational settings.

Children's home language and cultural background

In most educational settings in Queensland, Standard Australian English (SAE) is the language used by teachers, and it is the language children are expected to use proficiently in a range of contexts by the completion of secondary schooling.

Children in the early years are usually proficient in getting their meanings across in their home language in a small range of contexts. Many children will be using English but some will be speaking a variant, for example Aboriginal English, or another language like Torres Strait Creole or one of the many Aboriginal languages.

Since there is great cultural and linguistic diversity in some communities, teachers may teach children who speak a range of languages at home and who may have had little experience of speaking English. These children should not be discouraged from using their home languages in play with other children who speak the same language. They will develop SAE through their involvement in learning experiences where English is used.

Augmentative communication, such as signing or electronically assisted communication, is another language system used by some children with special needs. While these are nonverbal modes of communication, the language used will generally be English.

Along with differences in languages, children bring differences in cultural practices that accompany their language. In particular, some children will be used to different ways of talking to, or showing respect to, adults. Conversations with families and others will help teachers understand and plan for these differences.

Expectations of children at home

Families differ in their expectations of children. Some children may be quite independent and able to manage their own belongings and learning materials when they enter the preparatory setting. Others may not have been expected to be independent at home and may have to learn independence in the educational setting. The same children will, however, still be quite capable of learning and constructively taking part in learning experiences.

At home some children will be expected to use spoken language for a wide variety of purposes, such as describing shared experiences, playing language games, responding when spoken to, and participating in family discussions. These experiences are similar to those in the educational setting. Other children may not be involved in school-like experiences at home. They will use language to get things done; they may have many experiences without much discussion about them; they may be quite good at listening to other children but have less experience of listening to adults.

Children with special communication needs, who use augmentative language, may be used to particular ways of interacting in their home and in specialist settings and will need support to interact in the school setting. Teachers provide this support as they help other children learn to communicate and interact in ways that enable the child with special needs to be a partner in the learning community. All children add to their prior experiences by learning the expectations for communicating, behaving and managing resources in the preparatory context.

Children's prior play experiences

Children play and learn in particular ways in early childhood settings. The section "Creating contexts for learning and development" later in this chapter provides information on the importance of play in children's learning. Some children may not have developed strategies for learning through play in educational settings. These children may come from families where play is not seen as contributing to children's intellectual development or their play opportunities are limited by materials and space. Some parents and relatives will join in children's play and influence the type of play. For example, men are more likely to engage in physical play, especially with sons, and to play in ways that involve fine- and gross-motor skills and visual exploration of the environment. Girls may experience more verbal and "school-like" experiences, although many parents encourage similar play for both girls and boys. Play for many boys is limited to running, chasing, hiding and acting out their favourite superhero's adventures. In view of these experiences, some children will need to learn new ways to play that promote learning.

Children's experiences in care and educational settings

Many children will have had experiences in childcare centres and kindergartens, and they will usually adjust quickly to the preparatory setting. The ways of behaving, the organisation of the day, the management of resources and the language practices may be familiar. These children will be used to talking to an adult in a group in which they share the adult's attention and have had experience at taking turns at talking in group times. They will understand that sometimes they have to do what the teacher wants rather than what they want to do. Children who have had no previous experience in group settings need to have the ways of behaving in school explained to them.

Children new to schooling are frequently used to pursuing their own interests rather than being directed to particular learning experiences by other people. Their responses to learning experiences involving others will vary as a result of their experience and competence in learning in a group.

Understanding children's learning

Children start learning from the moment they are born, and are capable learners when they enter educational settings. Significant characteristics of young children's learning are that:

- they learn through personal experience

- their understandings of other people's talk is often at the literal, not inferential, level

- they understand best what they can feel (emotionally), see, touch, hear, taste and smell

- their attachment to particular adults and peers deepens their disposition to learn from and with them

- they are egocentric and, through experience and guidance, they learn how to cooperate, share and play collaboratively

- their enjoyment of learning experiences deepens their understandings and their disposition to persevere when problems arise

- they learn best through interactions with people, objects and representations during learning experiences that gradually increase in complexity, with appropriate amounts of time to develop deep understandings

- they construct understandings of shared symbol systems — writing, mathematical representations, logos, artistic representations — from personal and shared experiences with concrete materials and through representing their understandings in multiple ways.

Importance of active learning

The previous chapter "Perspectives that shape the early years curriculum" discussed children and learning and the social construction of knowledge. Children construct personal understandings through active exploration of their environment and interactions with people, objects and representations. The objects and representations must invite attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration, experimentation and imagination. Learning experiences must allow children to use as many of their senses as possible, since it is through the sensory pathways that the brain interprets and creates its knowledge structures. Emotion plays a significant role in how well children remember. Children will learn more deeply from positive and interesting learning experiences.

Positive relationships with adults and other children, and the relevance of activities to children's lives and interests, all foster positive attitudes. Children's dispositions towards learning are formed through these experiences. Positive dispositions are shaped by the constructive feedback that children receive from others and by the encouragement they receive to question, investigate, analyse and innovate as they learn.

Being part of a group

Learning to consider the needs and ideas of others at the same time as they are considering their own needs and ideas is a challenge for young children. To consider so many perspectives at the same time places quite a load on children's working memory. Fortunately, most children have a strong disposition towards making friendships with other children so they will compromise and collaborate with others.

Children need to learn how to negotiate roles and relationships with other children in group settings. Developing a range of strategies to gain access to play with others is important to children's personal wellbeing. Instead of forcing their way into play situations or taking equipment from others, children need to learn verbal strategies to join others. Language strategies such as "I'm your friend, right?" or "Would you like to play with me?" enable children to be part of groups in the indoor and outdoor areas.

Nonverbal strategies such as positioning themselves in or close to a group are also useful to children. They learn these social skills by observing other children and through explicit modelling by, and rehearsal with, adults. Some children who have had limited experiences with other children may need help from teachers to cope with the diversity amongst their peers. Involving someone who speaks the same language is a supportive strategy to enable children who have English as a second language to collaborate in group activities.

Learning the symbol systems

Children also have a diverse range of early experiences with the shared symbol systems of literacy and numeracy. Children's understandings of symbol systems are often implicit and context-specific, and they cannot easily explain it. Children living in communities where symbols and print abound can discuss why and where they are used. These children know the symbols for such things as petrol stations, railway crossings, fast food outlets, stop signs and traffic lights. They look through catalogues for the toys, scooters, videos and computer games available for purchase. They understand that menus are used to order food in eating places. Children in environments not well supplied with symbols and print may still identify culturally significant symbols, favourite logos, and words from television, computer games and magazines. They realise that symbols have meaning.

Some children are engaged in many literacy and numeracy events — such as writing party invitations, birthday cards and lists, assembling toys from instructions, sharing food and toys equally with their families, and grouping objects. Some have been using quantitative thinking about fixed quantities — counting cars, shells, oranges — and continuous quantities like sand and water, for some time. If an adult or older child has been present, children may also have learnt some of the language that is part of those literacy and numeracy experiences.

Being read to, reading books and talking about symbols may be new experiences for some children, especially for children from an oral language

tradition. Some children for whom English is a second language will be used to a language that is not written or read from left to right across a page. Playing with language and learning rhyming verses may also be a new experience for many children. When teachers understand children's prior experiences, they are able to select rhymes, songs and texts that are understandable and enjoyable to all children.

Children develop their early understandings of reading and writing through experiences involving reading and writing with more experienced people. Through these experiences, children develop many understandings about written language and its social purposes and will develop products like menus and notices for their play. Initially, children do not understand that words can represent speech written down — that realisation comes through many experiences of co-constructing texts with literate people demonstrating how they turn their thoughts into speech and their speech into written words. Once children understand this, they experiment with representing their spoken thoughts using their emergent understandings about letters and symbols.

Children and information technology

Many of today's young children have ready access to a wide range of socio-cultural practices. In particular, many children will have had experiences with popular culture through film and video texts, CDs, computer programs, interactive games, children's websites, advertising on television and in catalogues, and comics as well as books.

In every community, children's access to texts of all kinds will vary depending on the way texts are used in their home or locality. For instance, some children in remote areas may not experience print media or cinemas regularly but may have ready access to computer technology, while some children in urban areas may not have access to computers in their homes. The understandings that children bring about technology are a useful starting point for building new understandings in the educational setting.

Understanding learning and development in educational contexts

Children's responses to learning experiences in the educational context will vary because of their experience and competence in learning in a group and because of their diverse experiences outside the Preparatory Year program. Children will need different levels of support and interaction from teachers; some children may be fully engaged in the exploration and application of new experiences and learning, while other children may be content to observe.

The observant teacher will make links to the child's prior personal experience, making the invisible visible and the unknown known. For example, the teacher can help a child to engage in an activity meaningfully by explaining what other children are doing, and linking the activity to the child's own experience. For some children, teachers may need to explain what to attend to and how to attend. There are also many routines in a classroom that children have not experienced before — teachers can explain these routines and their purposes so that they are not mysterious to children.

The previous chapter describes the importance of the teacher's view of children as capable learners and the need to engage children in decision-making so that they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. The chapter also elaborates the teacher's role in scaffolding learning as children assume more control of the learning.

Table 3 provides a broad description of the four phases of learning and development within an educational setting: "Becoming aware", "Exploring", "Making connections" and "Applying". This description of learning is a construct to show learning progress rather than a rigorous description of learning in the early years. The four phases are a generalisation of learning. They are not intended to promote a view of a universal learning continuum for all children. They are intended to assist teachers as they monitor and support children's learning.

Children's movement from one phase to another will vary from child to child and from one area of learning to another. Each phase includes a description of the type of interactions that promote children's learning in that phase and help them move from one phase to another. These interactions scaffold and shape children's learning, helping them to build connections between the various aspects of learning and to gradually become independent in applying new learning.
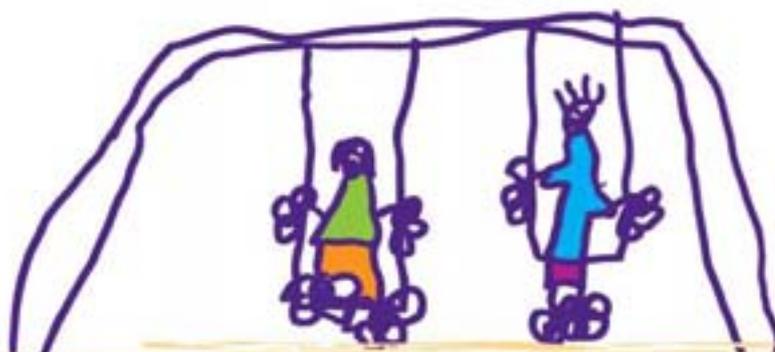
Table 3: The phases of learning and development

Becoming aware

Children:

- rely on their personal observations and habitual behaviour
- need explicit support to engage with new learning
- use their learning in limited contexts.

Children become aware of new things in their lives. They watch and listen to an activity, and discuss new objects, representations, people and practices. They may randomly explore the attributes of new materials.

Interactions that promote learning

Teachers provide explicit support to explain new learning to children and make links to their prior learning.

Exploring

Children:

- construct personal understandings
- need support to engage with new learning
- use their learning in familiar contexts.

Children explore new objects, representations and social practices for their own purposes.

Interactions that promote learning

Teachers provide support to extend children's personal understandings.

Making connections

Children:

- make connections between their personal understandings and commonly accepted understandings
- need some prompts to engage with and talk about the new learning
- are beginning to transfer their learning across familiar contexts.

Children begin to represent their ideas and understandings.

Interactions that promote learning

Teachers provide prompts or brief interactions to help children make connections between their personal understandings and commonly accepted understandings.

Applying

Children:

- more readily recall and explain their conceptual understandings
- apply their knowledge of the new learning independently
- confidently transfer their learning across familiar contexts.

Children confidently plan, explain and reflect on their learning.

Interactions that promote learning

While children can independently apply their new understandings and capabilities, teachers interact with them to deepen and further their understandings.

Building understandings about children

Gathering information about children's prior experiences

Teachers collect information about each child they teach so that the educational program is congruent with each child's prior experiences and curriculum expectations. This information should be gathered in partnership with the child's parents or carers and other colleagues. This enables the teacher to learn something of each family's background and cultural expectations of their child's learning and their perceptions of the child.

Other perspectives on the child's experience come from previous educators and, most importantly, from the child. Information collected as a basis for planning should include information on children's:

- social and cultural backgrounds, including geographical situation
- community environment
- use and valuing of different literacies in the community
- preschool, kindergarten and childcare experiences
- understandings, dispositions and capabilities
- special needs
- interests and community involvement such as sports, dance, music
- mobility
- gifts and talents.

Collecting ongoing information and making decisions about children's learning

As children learn in the educational setting, teachers gather information, about them through observations, conversations and focused analysis of notes, photographs and products of children's learning. This information gathering and the consequent decision making should take account of:

- teachers' possible assumptions about children's understandings, capabilities and dispositions based on initial interactions and implicit bias and stereotyping
- the adequacy of teachers' knowledge about children's prior experiences and social and cultural practices.

The section on "Monitoring and assessing" provides further information.

Critical reflection about understanding children

Critical reflection is a key technique for teachers in their role as lifelong learners about teaching. The following questions can help teachers to reflect critically on their understanding of children.

Reflecting on decision making

- How do I gather information about children from other partners — parents, carers, and teachers in other educational settings?

- How will I organise the information I gather on each child so that I can use it to further children's learning?

- How will I make links between children's prior experiences and the experiences in the preparatory setting?

- How will I provide a program that responds to children's interests, ideas and concerns and furthers children's learning?

- What are effective ways to foster positive dispositions to learning itself and to learning individually and collaboratively?

Links to other key components

- How do I make contact with parents and carers who do not visit the preparatory setting?

- How do I use my understandings about children to structure learning environments that will be responsive to their interests and prior learning and, at the same time, promote further learning?

- How will I ensure children engage in multi-sensory learning experiences?

- How will I create learning contexts that engage children in experiences that invite attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration, experimentation and imagination?

Equity and diversity

- What assumptions do I take for granted about children from different social and cultural groups?

- Am I still influenced in my interactions by my initial impressions of children?

- In what ways can I engage all the children with their diverse needs fully in the program?

- How do I plan for children to learn about ways of interacting with a wide range of other children?

Building partnerships

This section describes some of the partnerships that teachers may develop to promote children's learning in the preparatory setting, including:

- partnerships with children
- partnerships with families and carers
- partnerships with communities
- partnerships with other professionals.

It also describes teachers' roles in building and maintaining partnerships and critical reflection about building partnerships.

Partnerships include the formal and informal relationships and processes that people or groups participate in to support children's learning and development in the early years. Effective partnerships are characterised by people having common goals and expectations, communicating openly and treating each other with respect. They:

- contribute to supportive learning environments
- help children to connect with learning experiences
- build the intellectual quality of learning experiences
- provide opportunities for others to participate in decision making.

Partnerships may exist across various time frames such as a brief learning or social partnership established during the program by children on one day, or a long-term cultural partnership existing between children and an Elder or leader in the cultural community.

Partnerships help in the timely, accurate and meaningful sharing of information that assists children to participate successfully in the preparatory setting and later schooling. Research has shown that effective programs for children entering a new educational context are based on the establishment of positive relationships between all participants in the child's education.

Further advice on different types of partnerships is provided in the section "Promoting continuities through the Preparatory Year" in the Introduction, and in the next chapter, "Exploring decision-making processes".

Partnerships in the preparatory program involve all those who participate in children's learning. They include children, families and carers, teachers and teacher aides, other educational, support or specialist personnel, community members, and other interested people or organisations. Because so many different individuals and groups are involved, many ideas, values, beliefs, identities and cultures will influence the ways that partnerships are developed and maintained, as well as how partnerships are used effectively for a range of purposes in the early phase of school.

Teachers have a role in developing and supporting partnerships that involve:

- child and child
- child, teacher and teacher aide

- child, teacher and other educational or support personnel
- child and parent in the preparatory setting
- children, families, community members and the school.

The relationships and roles required by partners will differ depending on the contexts in which partnerships occur and their purposes. However they should all be built on trust and respect, recognise the contribution that partners can make, and provide opportunities for them to contribute to children's learning in a variety of ways.

Privacy, ethics and legislation

As teachers gather a wide variety of information, they are in a privileged position in communicating with children and partners. Therefore it is important to be mindful of ethical considerations, legislation related to privacy and school policies when working with partners and collecting and sharing information about children, families and the community.

Partnerships with children

Children's success in forming meaningful relationships and settling into the new learning contexts in the first weeks is fundamental to their transition to the school setting, and influential on their long-term success at school. Partnerships with children also promote continuity of learning and relationships.

By working in partnership with children, teachers:

- build a learning environment in which children can feel respected and safe
- make explicit the expected behaviours and the roles of all members of the classroom community
- identify learning styles, prior learning and understandings, capabilities and dispositions, and use these as starting points for learning
- collaboratively plan learning contexts to ensure that learning is meaningful to children
- build a sense of child agency by encouraging children to plan their learning, taking increasing responsibility for carrying out their plans and by supporting them to reflect on their learning
- ensure that children participate in the decision-making processes and develop ownership in the program.

Partnerships with families and carers

Families and carers make significant contributions to children's learning and development before and after children enter the preparatory setting. To build these partnerships, teachers need to accept different family structures and lifestyles, and be genuine in their attempts to involve families meaningfully.

By working in partnerships with families, teachers:

- develop learning environments that make the transition to the preparatory setting smooth and successful

- make connections between children's learning and experiences that occur outside of the preparatory setting
- involve families in supporting children's learning through sharing information and contributing their own knowledges and perspectives
- involve families in the preparatory setting, listening to and responding to their ideas, and recognising the contributions they make.

Partnerships with communities

The cultural and social communities in which children live have an impact on how they construct knowledge and understand the world. Preparatory settings should not be seen as separate from these communities but as embedded within them. As children build on or construct new understandings, capabilities and dispositions, they will be drawing from the knowledges that are seen as important in their own communities. Partnerships with communities will lead teachers to better understandings about children and how the preparatory program can best meet their learning and development needs.

By working in partnerships with communities, teachers:

- create learning environments that recognise children's social and cultural lives and the contributions that children make to their own communities
- create learning contexts that make connections between children's prior experiences in the community and their learning
- recognise the social or cultural biases that shape knowledges and minimise any barriers to children's learning and development
- reflect the important social and cultural aspects of the community in the preparatory program.

Partnerships with other professionals

When teachers develop professional partnerships, they draw on a wide knowledge base to help them create effective learning programs. These partnerships will be with teacher aides, teaching, administrative and support staff at the school, professionals who have supported children in previous learning/developmental or care programs, specialist personnel including medical, guidance or community liaison officers, and other educators or professional associations in early childhood education.

By working in professional partnerships, teachers:

- support their own work in establishing learning environments that support children's learning and development
- keep current with changes in the field and contribute to professional dialogue about the Preparatory Year and early childhood education
- build deeper understandings about children and use this knowledge to develop programs that encourage the participation of children, and meet their diverse needs and abilities
- act as advocates for children in educational, social and community contexts and provide opportunities for children's voices to be heard.

Teachers' roles in building and maintaining partnerships

While involving other partners in decision making is challenging, it also has the potential to add richness and relevance to decisions, and to develop a sense of shared ownership over the curriculum.

Building and maintaining partnerships requires teachers to:

- examine power relationships, their views about agency and ways to incorporate different partners' voices in decision making
- consider how their own and other partners' diverse experiences and expectations shape their views about children, learning and teaching and curriculum
- recognise, negotiate and mediate when partners' views diverge or tensions arise
- balance professional responsibilities for managing curriculum, and being accountable within school and system contexts, while still engaging partners authentically in negotiating curriculum
- understand the protocols and practices of diverse communities
- identify barriers to successful participation and promote the involvement of stakeholders
- work collaboratively by sharing information and valuing the input of others
- establish, maintain and review networks
- evaluate partnerships by reflecting on how successful partnerships are in supporting the shared vision for children's participation in learning.

Critical reflection about building partnerships

The following questions can help teachers reflect on building successful partnerships.

Reflecting on decision making

- What partnerships do I have in place to support children in the different contexts in which they learn, and how do I support and build on these partnerships?
- What assumptions shape my interactions with partners and how may these assumptions constrain or support the contributions that partnerships make to developing supportive learning environments?
- What processes do I have in place to allow those involved in partnerships to contribute?
- How do partnerships involve children and maximise their learning opportunities?

Links to other key components

- How do I develop partnerships that help me to build understandings about children's individual circumstances and backgrounds?
- How do the partnerships I develop help establish flexible learning environments?
- How do the partnerships provide support for children to learn in a variety of contexts including play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching?
- How do the partnerships that I promote support continuity in children's learning and make links between prior, current and future learning?

Equity and diversity

- How do I use partnerships to be inclusive of others' knowledges, cultures and lifestyles?
- How do partnerships I promote give people opportunities to build ownership in the Preparatory Year and contribute to decision making?

Establishing flexible learning environments
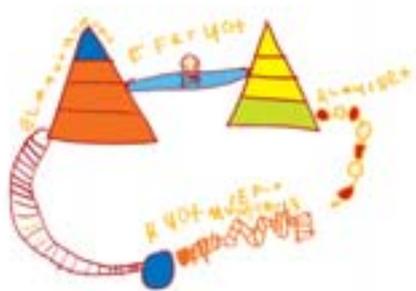
High-quality preparatory learning environments share common characteristics in relation to:

- physical environments
- social environments
- temporal environments.

Effective learning environments are purposefully constructed to be flexible, inviting, comfortable, accessible and responsive to children, their families and local community members. They provide engaging, stimulating and challenging experiences to aid children's holistic development.

Teachers organise the physical, social and temporal environments in collaboration with children and other partners. They consider how the environment's organisation enables children to work both independently and collaboratively on experiences relevant to their lives. Effective learning environments are designed to:

- promote co-construction of learning through interactions with others and with learning environments
- enable children to actively engage socially and intellectually, in their learning
- support learning through five learning contexts (play, real-life situations, routines and transitions, investigations, and focused learning and teaching)
- facilitate the integration of learning experiences across the five early learning areas (social & personal learning, health & physical learning, language learning & communication, early mathematical understandings, active learning processes)
- promote aesthetic awareness by providing children with opportunities to take part in sensory experiences, including visual, auditory and bodily kinaesthetic modalities.

Learning environments that are flexible and supportive in the use of time, space, materials, objects and interactions promote active co-construction of knowledge. When collaborating with children on planning and using learning environments, teachers consider possibilities about flow of movement and flexibility in use of outdoor and indoor spaces.

In the outdoor environment, teachers purposefully arrange fixed and moveable items to extend children's learning as they engage in real-life experiences, physical activities and games, construction, investigations, dramatic play, oral language and literacy activities, sand and water play and artistic experiences.

Indoor learning experiences provide children with opportunities to work on self-chosen and negotiated activities involving artistic materials, texts, information technology, manipulative and construction materials, dramatic play and a variety of real-life experiences. Indoor environments also cater for quiet and active learning, routines such as mealtimes, and small-group

experiences in which adults and children co-construct learning. Open carpeted spaces are available for larger construction tasks, games, movement and whole-group learning interactions.

The social environment of effective classrooms is characterised by relationships based on mutual respect. The classroom is a learning community in which all partners share ownership and responsibility. Regular communication between all partners sustains commitment to the learning community.

The temporal environment refers to the way time is used to support learning. Young children need a predictable sequence of events in their day. At the same time, the daily program needs to be flexible to respond to unplanned learning opportunities that arise. Children need extended periods of time to engage in sustained investigations. The organisation of time needs to give children a sense of continuity from one day to the next.

Dynamic, flexible and supportive learning environments are responsive to the needs and interests of children and other partners. Teachers work collaboratively with partners to ensure learning environments reflect shared ideas, values, beliefs, identities and cultures. Tables 4, 5 and 6 describe in more detail the characteristics of high-quality flexible learning environments in the early phase of schooling.

Table 4: Characteristics of high-quality, flexible, physical learning environments

Characteristics of spaces and furniture	Responsive teaching/learning strategies
Comfortable and functional furniture for children and adults that considers aspects of inclusivity. Grouping of materials for accessibility. Predictable, yet dynamic spaces. Collaboratively designed spaces for groups and individuals. Attractive and functional display spaces that are accessible to children. Purpose-built outdoor and indoor storage and shelving. Spaces for quiet reflection/ activities.	Planning for and creating spaces outdoors and indoors for group and independent experiences. Supervising and promoting safe use of physical environments. Considering how resources, spaces and events enhance or hinder monitoring learning and assessing in a range of contexts. Providing resources that cater for diversity, e.g. gender, race, culture, lifestyles, abilities/disabilities. Ensuring equitable access for all children in the preparatory program. Encouraging diverse ways of using resources to challenge biases and stereotypes. Co-constructing a diverse range of outdoor/indoor learning environments with children that cater to their abilities and interests and challenge and extend thinking, understandings, capabilities and dispositions, e.g. sensory trail/garden and dramatic play spaces, e.g. TV studio. Providing easy access to objects, materials and tools to encourage children to make independent choices about their learning. Encouraging children to take responsibility for the learning environment. Sharing physical spaces with other classes in appropriate ways.
Characteristics of resources	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Changing range of resources, materials, objects and spaces in outdoor and indoor settings. Open-ended materials and objects for inquiry-based learning. Balance between a range of closed and open spaces and materials.	Providing easy access to objects, materials and tools to encourage children to make independent choices about their learning. Supporting learning across a range of contexts — play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching. Integrating learning meaningfully across all learning areas. Encouraging problem solving that involves relationships between events, objects and people. Investigating alternative possibilities through longer-term project work with children. Providing a "literature-rich" environment that scaffolds development of oral language and early literacy, including environmental print, pinboard displays, signs and shared books. Investigating a range of literacies, including use of technologies. Providing stimulating learning experiences that foster deeper engagement and higher-order thinking by children. Fostering diverse ways of thinking, knowing and doing.
Aesthetic and sensory characteristics	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Diverse and changing range of sensory objects, materials, spaces and experiences. Placement of objects and materials that promotes aesthetic appeal. Display of children's and other partners' collections of objects.	Promoting aesthetic qualities of outdoor and indoor environments. Using language that explicitly describes aesthetic qualities. Exploring artistic styles, forms, and techniques with children. Engaging children actively in contributing to displays. Examining and comparing others' artworks in a range of contexts including school, community, art gallery, museum.

Table 5: Characteristics of high-quality, flexible, social learning environments

Characteristics of partnerships	Responsive teaching/learning strategies
Responsive and reciprocal relationships with partners based on mutual respect. Active involvement by adults and children in extended, high-quality conversations. Communication with all partners about key components of a preparatory curriculum.	Welcoming, respecting and valuing children, parents/carers, school staff, community members and Elders. Identifying potential barriers that may inhibit partnerships and putting solutions in place. Establishing rapport and warmth within relationships. Recognising the value of informal communication for building partnerships. Supporting and using a range of communication processes with partners. Encouraging participation of partners in aspects of curriculum decision making. Promoting a sense of learning community by advocating ownership and responsibility by all partners. Having high expectations of all children. Minimising disruptions and conflicts and assisting children to develop capabilities in conflict resolution.
Characteristics of diversity	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Opportunities for children to notice and talk about diversity (e.g. gender, race, culture, lifestyles, abilities/disabilities). Provision of choice and negotiation with children about aspects of learning. Teachers, children, and other partners scaffold learning for others to aid co-construction of meaning.	Respecting and valuing social and cultural diversity. Encouraging children to share their understandings and abilities with others. Collaboratively planning learning experiences. Exploring social and cultural issues with children. Supporting children to analyse and reconsider understandings, expectations and non-dominant views. Supporting families and local communities.
Characteristics of transitions	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Smooth transitions from care/educational settings into the Preparatory Year and through school. Smooth and negotiated transitions from one learning experience to another. Shared understandings with children about managing change in situations.	Including children and all partners in decision making about transitions. Promoting the Preparatory Year to children and parents as a part of the "whole schooling experience". Promoting a positive approach to transitions from care/educational settings into the Preparatory Year and through school. Encouraging children to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings about how change to routines and situations affect them. Modelling with children how to manage changes. Encouraging children to generate and share ideas about ways to manage changes in situations.
Characteristics of expectations	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Consistency in expectations, rules and routines. Rules and expectations that are clear to and respectful of children. Explicit links between familiar interactions and expectations and those associated with classroom experiences.	Collaborating to create shared understandings about rules and expectations with children. Communicating rules and expectations clearly to parents/carers. Collaborating about and explaining changes in expectations, rules and routines with partners.

Table 6: Characteristics of high-quality, flexible, temporal learning environments

Characteristics of routines	Responsive teaching/learning strategies
Time used consistently but flexibly. Consistency in interactions and learning as staff change, e.g. during meal breaks or non-contact time. Flexibility to change planned use of time.	Building a sense of security by establishing predictable routines such as greetings and farewells, toileting, meals and relaxation or quiet times. Using routines and transitions for meaningful learning. Including children in discussions about varying routines. Providing time for unexpected teachable moments. Smooth management of transitions.
Characteristics of learning	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Viewing children as individual, unique people who require different amounts of time to acquire understandings, capabilities and dispositions towards learning. Balanced time for child-initiated exploration as well as teacher-scaffolded interaction within play, real-life situations and investigations. Inquiry-based learning through investigation of real-life issues and problems. A project approach that stems from children's interests and needs.	Collaboratively planning with children to incorporate their interests. Providing time for collaborative planning and reflecting with children. Allocating time to learning involving school or community events. Building on children's learning using extended time for conversations and scaffolding. Maximising opportunities to talk with children about how and what they are learning to facilitate the active construction of knowledge. Providing blocks/extended periods of time for children to sustain interest in investigation of topics. Meeting children's needs by increasing or decreasing time allocated to an activity, changing the balance of time spent in child- and teacher-initiated experiences or changing sequences of time.
Characteristics of planning for time	**Responsive teaching/learning strategies**
Availability of teachers each day for informal conversations with parents/carers or visitors. Regular meetings of team members (teacher, teacher aide, specialists, others) to discuss, compare notes and reflect on their work of teaching.	Being available regularly to talk with parents about their child's day and learning. Using a variety of time management techniques to ensure time is allocated to communicate informally, and occasionally formally, with all partners in the learning community, e.g. timetable, roster, diary entries, communication book, displaying plans. Regularly reflecting with children about what was learned, and how they learned it, and documenting this for sharing. Using a variety of communication techniques to keep parents/carers and families informed of the learning program, e.g. print and electronic newsletters, email, telephone contact and home/school communication information notebooks.

Critical reflection about learning environments

Underlying assumptions about education and learning, and children and childhood, shape and limit teachers' decisions about learning environments. Questioning these assumptions can allow teachers to recognise and reconsider:

- what they prioritise, value and exclude within environments
- implicit assumptions and expectations for girls, boys, and children with particular social and cultural backgrounds, or special needs
- those teacher–child interactions that limit some children's learning
- aspects of the learning environment that promote or hinder children's thinking
- strategies that challenge those behaviours in children that disrupt other children's learning.

Critical reflection enables teachers to reconstruct learning environments that are socially just and inclusive, and relevant to children's family and community contexts.

Consider the following questions as part of ongoing critical reflections about flexible learning environments:

Reflecting on decision making

- In what ways do the learning environments reflect what I and other partners believe and value about childhood, learning and teaching, and partnerships?
- How do I actively involve children and other partners in decision making about setting up, maintaining and changing learning environments?
- How do the objects, materials, tools and spaces that I provide in learning environments maximise children's learning opportunities?
- How do I structure the learning environment to maximise play, real-life situations, investigations, transitions and routines, and focused learning and teaching?
- What types of interactions do I use to scaffold children's learning within learning environments?
- In what ways do I encourage children to engage in a range of outdoor and indoor learning environments?
- How do I monitor and assess children's learning in a range of learning environments? How does this information contribute to making judgments about learning and future planning?

Links to other key components

- In what ways do the learning environments that I establish reflect children's personal lives and communities?
- How do I make the preparatory setting welcoming to and respectful of children, families, community members and other visitors?
- How do I involve children and other partners in creating and making changes to learning environments?
- How can I make the learning environment support children's engagement in all of the contexts for learning?
- In what ways do learning environments enhance children's learning in each of the early learning areas and promote lifelong learning and dispositions towards learning?

Equity and diversity

- How do my choices about learning environments hinder some children's learning and empower others to learn?
- In what ways do learning environments reflect children's sense of self as capable and inquisitive learners?
- How do I plan for flexible use of space, materials and interactions to cater for children's emerging needs and interests?
- How do I cater for inclusivity and use the diversity of the learning community as a resource?
- How do I cater for children's diverse social and cultural understandings, capabilities and dispositions?
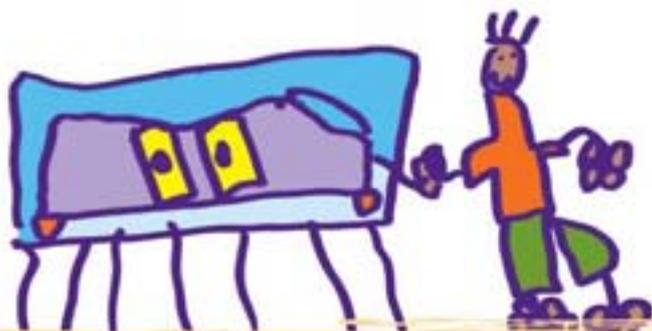
Creating contexts for learning and development

Within flexible preparatory learning environments, teachers purposefully create five main contexts for learning and development:

- play
- real-life situations
- investigations
- routines and transitions
- focused learning and teaching.

These contexts also provide meaningful contexts for assessment in the early phase of school.

Children have opportunities to learn within each of the five contexts in both indoor and outdoor preparatory environments. The contexts for learning and development are designed to actively engage children, parents, teachers and teacher aides as partners in learning. Together, these partners co-construct, reconstruct and reflect on new ways to make sense of their world and relationships with others.

A balanced curriculum provides opportunities for children to participate in all five contexts for learning regularly and a range of contexts daily. Longer blocks of time for engaging in active learning through play, real-life situations and investigations are interspersed with meaningful routines and transitions, and short, appropriate, focused learning and teaching. Children are also likely to shift between contexts as learning progresses. For example, initial investigations using art materials may lead to play with materials and processes and then shift towards real-life art-making.

Effective contexts for learning and development exhibit the following characteristics:

- active emotional, social, physical and intellectual engagement of all partners in learning
- engagement in interactions involving people, objects and representations
- learning that invites attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration, experimentation and imagination
- opportunities to learn independently and with others
- negotiation and opportunities to make choices
- a sense of shared ownership of and responsibility for learning and involvement of partners in shared decision making
- flexibility to respond to shifts and changes in children's ideas and interests
- opportunities to use multiple sensory channels to learn and to use multiple intelligences
- opportunities to extend oral language development, engage with multiple literacies and numeracy experiences in meaningful and purposeful ways

- active exploration of issues associated with diversity and equity, and inclusion of children and families with diverse backgrounds and needs
- a sense of connectedness with others and the world
- a safe, supportive and stimulating environment.

Within these learning contexts, teachers and other partners:

- facilitate learning
- collaborate as learning partners
- make learning explicit
- build connections between prior learning and new learning
- challenge children's thinking to develop deep understandings.

Children may engage in these learning contexts as individuals, in small groups or as a whole class, both indoors and outdoors. Learning within these contexts may arise spontaneously or be child- or adult-initiated. It is essential that teachers recognise that learning is embedded within each learning context and use teachable moments to make learning explicit, challenge children to consider new ideas, test current thinking and develop deeper understandings.

At various times, children and adults share control over the direction of the learning, and the ways partners interact within these contexts will shift as they work together to decide:

- the degree of choice
- the focus of the learning
- the degree of child- or adult-initiation or direction
- how, when and for how long they will interact in particular contexts
- the organisation and mix of learning contexts.

These decisions need to reflect children's emerging and changing ideas, interests and preferences, as well as their social and cultural backgrounds. Given the diversity of children in preparatory settings, learning experiences in each of the five contexts might look different, but they will still exhibit common characteristics.

Play

In the early phase of schooling the purpose of play is to support children's learning and development. Therefore teachers need to scaffold the play to extend children's learning. Play occurs in both indoor and outdoor environments. It provides a powerful context in which children learn as they actively engage socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually with people, objects and representations.

Through play, children develop thinking and problem-solving strategies. They use and extend oral language capabilities, learn literacy and numeracy practices, explore a range of ways to symbolise experiences and develop imagination and creativity. Play-based experiences provide children with opportunities to build their personal identities as successful and responsible learners. In play, children are able to learn through all their senses, make connections with their prior knowledges, practise and master learning, sustain concentration and take risks in enjoyable and non-threatening contexts.

Play, however, also involves children in role-playing challenging life experiences as they seek to make sense of their world. Some play can have a harmful effect on developing identities, and may reinforce inappropriate stereotypes and power relationships. Play, therefore, provides meaningful contexts for sensitively examining with children underlying assumptions and issues, such as fairness and bias. This can enable children to consider alternatives and take action to address inequities.

Play takes many forms. It is valued and understood differently by various partners involved in education. All forms of play in the educational setting involve problem solving. Some of the types of play commonly used in the early phase of school are listed in Table 7. Although they are described separately, many learning experiences involve several types of play.

Table 7: Types of educational play

Types of play	Examples
Socio-dramatic	Children setting up and running a flower shop.
Fantasy	Children creating props for space adventures.
Exploratory	Exploring the properties of new manipulative or construction materials; looking through magnifier/ lenses to see how they work and the effect they have.
Manipulative	Doing puzzles, making necklaces or constructions.
Physical	Running, hopping, skipping, climbing, moving through obstacle courses.
Games with rules	Playing board and card games; outdoor games; child-created games with rules.

While early childhood teachers view play through an educational lens, children engage in play for different purposes. For children, play is a way to develop relationships or organise and make sense of their world. When children engage in play, they bring diverse background experiences,

developing identities and perceptions about their own and others' social and cultural experiences. They draw on their own experiences and perceptions of others to create contexts in which to play. Teachers need to recognise that at times these perceptions of others can be negative and act as a barrier to learning. On the other hand, negative perceptions can also be a starting point for new learning.

Not all parents and educators share early childhood teachers' views about play as a valuable context for learning. Teachers often need to advocate for the various types of play by providing opportunities for families and colleagues to make connections between their priorities, understandings and values and the learning that occurs when play is skilfully and deliberately scaffolded. Some partners may find it reassuring to know that research indicates that play is often more effective than direct formal instruction in promoting children's learning.

Play is particularly effective for learning the foundational concepts, oral language, thinking processes and social competence that children require to be successful learners in school. When children learn through play and are actively engaged in learning, new understandings, capabilities and dispositions are more likely to be sustained and extended over time. With experience, children's play changes to become more socially and intellectually complex.

In the early phase of schooling, it is important for teachers to plan:

- extended periods for children to engage in play contexts so that their learning becomes increasingly complex

- interactions involving children, teachers and other partners. These participants in the play take on different and shifting roles including the roles of co-player, observer, listener, initiator, responder, facilitator, scaffolder, modeller, questioner, challenger or mediator.

Play contexts provide meaningful opportunities for children to explore learning from a range of early learning areas and transfer learning from one situation to another. They also provide valuable contexts within which teachers can monitor and assess learning.

In their play children project themselves into the adult activities of their culture and rehearse their future roles and values. This play is in advance of development …

In play a child is always above his actual age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.
Lev Vygotsky

Real-life situations

Real-life situations allow teachers to take into account and draw on social and cultural diversity and local community priorities and/or needs. Real-life learning situations enable children to build connections between their home, community and classroom experiences.

These connections are built as family and community members come into the school environment to share knowledges and experiences and children go out into their communities on excursions, investigations and celebrations. Real-life situations are particularly important as they provide opportunities for teachers to make explicit how, where and why people use spoken language, literacy and numeracy in their everyday lives.

Decisions about how and when children take part in real-life situations need to be negotiated with children and families to ensure they are actually relevant and "real" to children, and provide worthwhile learning opportunities.

Real-life situations that may occur in preparatory classrooms include cooking, gardening, reading and writing texts for real purposes, conducting an experiment, making artworks, working on a project, talking with visitors (including parents) about their family or work roles, histories and experiences, attending performances or searching the internet. Real-life experiences also occur when teachers encourage children to take part authentically in classroom communities; for example, when they collaboratively plan an experience, address a social inequity, or resolve real social conflicts.

Visits within the local and broader community also provide real-life opportunities to explore roles and relationships, understand different perspectives, share new experiences and learn about their world. Visits may involve children being part of community events, experiencing community places and spaces, natural and built environments, and exploring community work roles and workplaces.

Investigations

Investigations generally involve children in interacting with people, objects and representations, as they inquire, explore relationships and test ideas. Investigations in the early phase of learning provide opportunities to explore ways to communicate; investigate social, natural and built environments; and experiment with artistic, scientific, technological and mathematical ideas and processes. Investigations arise from the questions children ask, from ideas and events that arouse their curiosity or from the need to collect further information for something they want to do.

Investigations may include:

- comparing the mass of everyday objects in a variety of ways
- exploring how sound is created using vibration
- using books and communication technologies to investigate a topic of interest

- generating questions and finding possible answers
- creating maps and diagrams to communicate ideas to others
- investigating ways to construct a garden or play space
- investigating ways to use art materials and processes
- examining the parts of an old machine and how they work
- identifying and creating patterns with real objects
- investigating how symbols and representations can be used in particular situations to communicate ideas to others
- examining aesthetic features of environments
- testing out ideas about ways to move their bodies or other objects
- examining the characteristics of particular natural or built environments
- investigating ways to negotiate turns with others or resolve conflicts within play situations.

Teachers scaffold investigations by asking questions, posing problems, challenging thinking, modelling, explaining and suggesting alternatives and involving children in decision making. They help children to plan and follow through investigations and draw conclusions from their investigative process. Teachers also support children to work collaboratively to test ideas, solve problems, represent findings and consider alternative ways of understanding and knowing.

Children's engagement in investigative processes may be shaped by their social and cultural backgrounds, special needs, talents or gifts, gender, race and class. Teachers may need to monitor the language, interaction patterns and relationships that develop as investigations progress to ensure that some children do not dominate situations while others take passive roles.

Routines and transitions

Routines and transitions provide important opportunities for meaningful spontaneous and planned learning. Because routines within the classroom usually differ from home routines, teachers need to support children to gain familiarity with classroom cultures and practices.

Routines include regular organisational events such as meal times, relaxation times, toileting times and tidy-up times. They also include major teaching and learning strategies that are regular parts of the program such as collaborative planning, reading to children, sharing and reflection time, music and movement. Routines are an integral part of the curriculum and as such take into consideration the diverse needs of children. They:

• are predictable, yet flexible

• ensure that adults and children actively participate in learning that is embedded in the routines

• should be negotiated with children and changed in response to emerging needs.

Organisational routines are particularly valuable for developing independence and personal identities. They provide opportunities for children to use symbols for real purposes, such as locating belongings and resources. Routines such as meal times provide opportunities for teachers to scaffold learning as children share jokes or views about characters in the media, categorise the types of foods they eat, take turns, share and learn to be responsible and independent.

 At times the teacher will be replaced by other staff who need to be familiar with the classroom routines and the learning embedded in the experiences. This helps to ensure continuity in learning for children.

Other routines involve regularly used teaching strategies. They focus on children developing particular understandings and capabilities over a sustained period. They always provide opportunities for focused learning and teaching. For example, reading to children daily develops their sense of story, familiarity with written language patterns, vocabulary, and understandings of the concepts of print and the purposes of reading.

Transitions provide learning experiences while also facilitating children's gradual movement from one learning context to another. Transitions often take the form of musical, language or conceptual games that allow two or three children to move from a group experience to a meal break for example, or from indoors to outdoors.

Teachers use transition times to introduce concepts, provide meaningful practice of skills, recall information, make connections between classroom discussions and life experiences, recount experiences, respond to texts, think about relationships and patterns, and share personal knowledges. Transitions need to be carefully planned and negotiated with children so they form an integrated and meaningful part of the learning program.

Focused learning and teaching

Whether planned, child- or adult-initiated or occurring spontaneously, focused learning and teaching provides opportunities in which teachers purposefully and skilfully make learning explicit.

In focused learning and teaching situations children actively co-construct understandings through interacting with people, objects and representations. In the Preparatory Year, it is inappropriate for children to assume passive roles as happens with decontextualised drill and practice activities and worksheets.

While focused learning and teaching generally involves teacher guidance to make learning explicit, the focus and direction of learning can also be collaboratively planned with children. Children are active in their own learning and often involved in scaffolding others' learning. Teachers ensure that learning and teaching are focused to meet the diverse needs of children with special needs or gifts and talents, and children with particular linguistic, social and cultural requirements.

Focused learning and teaching may be situated within play contexts, real-life situations, investigations, and routines or transitions. In these situations, focused learning and teaching uses "teachable moments" to make learning explicit. These focused learning and teaching opportunities may involve a single child or a small group of children who are actively involved in the particular experience where something explicit can be learnt through interactions with an adult or peer.

Focused learning and teaching can also occur in small and large groups in which children and adults take part in significant conversations as they explore objects and representations. These group experiences are often planned to follow up on informal interactions and emerging interests, so that learning can be elaborated.

Small and large group learning situations need to be organised flexibly, as young children often find it difficult to sustain concentration in groups, and their interests in learning may vary or change. Teachers, therefore, need to remain responsive to children, and manage the length of time and types of interactions to facilitate active engagement in learning.

Focused learning and teaching provides a context for developing children's knowledge about the world, skills for working within a learning community, metacognitive skills, and metalanguage. Decisions about the focus of learning and teaching are based on ongoing assessment and on-the-spot judgments about how best to respond to children's questions and situations that arise throughout the day. These decisions are also negotiated and responsive to children's emerging interests, ideas and perspectives.

Some examples of appropriate focused learning and teaching are:

- modelling how to write a brief text related to children's play in the context of the play and sharing or extending this during group time
- identifying rhyming words in a piece of text and generating new rhymes

- helping children share and reflect on their learning after they have engaged in a variety of investigations, play and real-life situations
- introducing ways to use musical instruments, move to music or explore particular visual arts materials, mediums, elements and processes
- asking visitors questions about their work, family roles or life experiences
- making plans about how to use outdoor equipment to support socio-dramatic play or create movement challenges
- sharing familiar media texts and discussing characteristics of preferred characters
- observing the characteristics of an insect found in the garden and locating a text to find out more information
- discussing fairness with a small group of children when a child is excluded from a play situation
- identifying where the first letter from a child's name appears on signs in the environment and making explicit that the symbol represents a particular sound or sounds
- finding information from a book to create or strengthen decisions about roles within make-believe play settings
- finding patterns in the built and natural environment
- collaboratively planning learning experiences with children and recording the plan on butchers' paper
- identifying with children the language and classroom practices to be used at school.

Both children's backgrounds and parental values and expectations may influence how children take part in focused learning and teaching. Many children need explicit assistance to develop skills for engaging in focused learning and teaching and using forms of interaction seen as appropriate or preferred in the classroom. While children will gradually learn ways to interact in classroom contexts, teachers also need to be flexible and to adjust expectations and contexts to cater for the diverse and changing needs of individuals and groups of children.

Critical reflection about contexts for learning and development

Partners' beliefs, assumptions and views about children, learning and teaching shape and constrain their decisions about contexts for learning. Decisions about learning contexts have a strong effect on who learns, what is learnt and assessed, and how it is learnt and assessed. Critical reflection enables partners to generate new possibilities for practice as they:

- critique taken-for-granted assumptions that shape what is included or excluded, valued or devalued in educational learning contexts and consider alternatives

- examine differences between educational learning contexts and home, care and community contexts and identify ways to support children to manage transitions between them

- examine how power is shared within adult–child and child–child relationships and how it influences learning

- recognise how learning contexts shape children's identities and learning

- identify how learning contexts may act to minimise or foster inequities in learning opportunities.

The following questions can assist teachers and other partners as they make decisions about contexts for learning and development.

Reflecting on decision making

- What assumptions shape and limit how I plan, interact and reflect on learning contexts and how can limitations be reduced?

- How do I use play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching to maximise learning?

- How do I ensure that children engage in all learning contexts across a day, week and year both indoors and outdoors?

- How do I encourage children to engage in a range of contexts as active agents in their own learning?

- How can I adapt or change teaching interactions to make learning more explicit and purposeful and ensure children develop deep understandings in different learning contexts?

- How do I maximise learning opportunities through flexible combinations of child-initiated, teacher-initiated, collaboratively planned and spontaneous learning opportunities?

- How do I monitor and assess learning within a range of learning contexts and how am I using that information to make my decisions?

Links to other key components

- How do I gather information within learning contexts to help build understandings about children?

- How do I involve various partners to promote learning in a range of learning contexts?

- How do I explore different understandings about learning contexts held by partners and develop a shared understanding about the value of these learning contexts?

- How do my decisions about the physical, social and temporal environments shape children's interactions within particular learning contexts?

- What are children learning as they engage in various contexts for learning?

Equity and diversity

- How do I work with children to acknowledge and engage with issues related to diversity, biases, stereotypes, inequities and power relationships that influence interactions and their own and others' learning within various contexts for learning?

- How do I include diverse groups of children in learning within a range of learning contexts?

Exploring what children learn

The early learning areas are derived from the factors identified by research as being associated with later success in school. The early learning areas are:

- **Social & personal learning**
- **Health & physical learning**
- **Language learning & communication**
- **Early mathematical understandings**
- **Active learning processes.**

Positive dispositions to learning are closely related to success in school and are included as part of personal learning. Dispositions are developed through experiences and interactions in all learning areas.

The early learning areas are interrelated; the understandings, capabilities and dispositions developed in one area are often used by children as they learn in the others. While the content of these areas is described separately, most learning experiences integrate many or all of the five early learning areas. In every learning area, children are encouraged to represent their learning in a variety of ways. Table 8 describes the major relationships between the early learning areas and the key learning areas used in Years 1 to 7.

Table 8: Major relationships between the early learning areas and the key learning areas

Early learning areas	Specific focus within the early learning areas	Key learning areas
Social & personal learning	Social learning Personal learning	SOSE HPE
Health & physical learning	Making healthy choices Gross-motor Fine-motor	HPE
Language learning & communication	Oral language Early literacy	English LOTE
Early mathematical understandings	Early numeracy	Mathematics
Active learning processes	Thinking Investigating Imagining and responding	Science SOSE Technology The Arts

More detailed information about children's learning in relation to the early learning areas is presented in the "learning statement overviews" at the end of this chapter. Each overview contains a learning statement that describes the focus of the learning area. In addition, each overview provides suggestions for planning learning experiences, for teaching interactions, for monitoring and assessing and for reflecting on children's learning.

A list of learning statements from the early learning areas is provided in Table 9 later in this section.
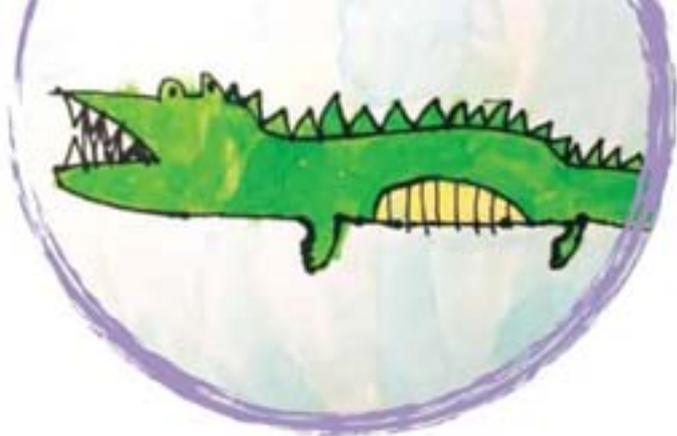
Social & personal learning

The focus in *Social & personal learning* has two dimensions. The social learning dimension focuses on building children's awareness of being members of many social groups, including family, cultural and community. In this area, learning experiences contribute to developing children's abilities to respect and cooperate with other people. Social learning develops understandings, capabilities and dispositions related to constructing understandings about social and cultural identities and sustaining relationships.

The personal learning dimension focuses on developing children's positive identity, self-esteem, resilience, personal organisation and independence as they interact successfully with others and their learning environments.

Health & physical learning

The focus in *Health & physical learning* is on gross- and fine-motor development, and making healthy choices to foster a sense of wellbeing in children. In this area, learning experiences contribute to developing children's positive health choices and movement skills as they interact successfully with others and their learning environments.

Language learning & communication

The focus in *Language learning & communication* is on spoken language and early literacy. In this area, children construct, communicate and interpret meanings for a range of purposes and in a range of contexts as they speak & listen, read & view and write & shape. While Standard Australian English (SAE) is used and explored in the early years curriculum, children's home languages are also valued and included in the program.

In the Preparatory Year, language experiences involve children in learning about the purposes for using language, the patterns (grammatical structure) and conventions (expected practices in particular contexts) of language, the concepts of print, phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge.

Early mathematical understandings

The focus in *Early mathematical understandings* is on children investigating their environment and communicating their mathematical ideas. In this area, children develop those mathematical understandings that are the foundations for future success in mathematical thinking. Early mathematical understandings promote children's developing understandings, capabilities and dispositions related to number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data and space.

Active learning processes

The focus in *Active learning processes* is on thinking, investigating, imagining and responding. In this area, children develop investigative processes, positive dispositions towards investigating, and understandings about natural, built, social, technological and virtual environments. Children also develop their abilities to express ideas creatively using a variety of experiences, media and artistic forms related to dance, drama, media, music and visual arts.

Thinking processes are embedded in all early learning areas. Teachers need to consider explicitly what types of thinking are included in learning experiences when planning for, interacting with, monitoring and assessing, and reflecting on learning across the curriculum.

Some important thinking processes evident in the learning statement overviews include inquiring, exploring, investigating, challenging, planning, evaluating, considering alternative strategies/ways, analysing, reflecting, predicting, designing and comparing.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is also embedded throughout the early learning areas. Examples of how teachers can plan ICT learning experiences are included in the learning statement overviews.
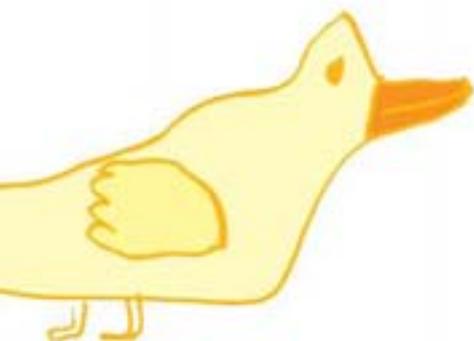
Table 9: A summary of the learning statements in the early learning areas

Early learning area	Specific focus	Learning statement
Social & personal learning	Social learning	Children sustain relationships by: • acknowledging and negotiating rights, roles and responsibilities in a range of contexts • cooperating with others in social situations.
		Children build early understandings about diversity by: • investigating and communicating positively about the social and cultural practices of people in their community.
	Personal learning	Children build a positive sense of self by: • developing a sense of personal identity as a capable learner • acting with increasing independence and responsibility towards learning and personal organisation.
Health & physical learning	Making healthy choices	Children build a sense of wellbeing by: • making choices about their own and others' health and safety with increasing independence.
	Gross motor	Children build a sense of wellbeing by: • using and extending gross-motor skills when integrating movements and using equipment.
	Fine motor	Children build a sense of wellbeing by: • using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects.
Language learning & communication	Oral language	Children expand their oral language by: • using spoken language (including home language, or signed or augmentative communication) for a range of purposes • exploring the patterns and conventions of spoken, signed or augmentative language • interacting with peers and familiar adults using, with support, the conventions associated with formal and informal group settings including attentive listening.
	Early literacy (reading & viewing)	Children become readers and viewers by: • using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.
	Early literacy (writing & shaping)	Children become writers and shapers by: • experimenting with emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to communicate meanings.
Early mathematical understandings	Early numeracy	Children build early mathematical understandings about number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data and space by: • investigating and communicating about quantities and their representations, and attributes of objects and collections • investigating and communicating about position, movement and direction • investigating and communicating about order, sequence and pattern.
Active learning processes	Thinking	Children think and enquire by: • generating and discussing ideas and plans and solving problems.
	Investigating the natural world	Children think and enquire by: • investigating their ideas about phenomena in the natural world • developing shared understandings about these phenomena.
	Investigating technology	Children think and enquire by: • investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life
	Investigating environments	Children think and enquire by: • investigating features of, and ways to sustain, environments.
	Imagining and responding	Children generate, represent and respond to ideas, experiences and possibilities by: • experimenting with materials and processes in a variety of creative, imaginative and innovative ways • discussing and responding to the qualities of their own and others' representations, experiences and artistic works.

The following scenario illustrates how children in a Preparatory Year can be involved in a project that integrates learning in the five early learning areas and is child-responsive. It also identifies the links to the specific focuses within the learning areas.

Table 10: Examples of links to learning areas and focuses in the Preparatory Year

Links to language learning & communication	Learning experience	Links to early mathematical understandings
Oral language • developing oral language and building a vocabulary about gardening and plants • generating and communicating ideas about designing and creating a vegetable garden and market stall — sequencing ideas; vocabulary and language structures of temporal order, description and explanation • developing language associated with group work/cooperation (roles, rights and responsibilities) • developing language through play in a lifelike context of the "market stall" — language structures of greeting, request and transaction. **Early literacy** • collaboratively reading for a range of "real-life" purposes including seed packets, gardening roster • collaboratively writing for a range of "real-life" purposes including labels, letters to parents or each other about the project, jobs roster, list of needs, recording recounts in a class diary and procedural texts about planting.	*A child brought to school some vegetables from his garden at home. The vegetables were carrots, beans, tomatoes and zucchinis.* *During his "talk" the child explained how he and his mother grew the vegetables from little seedlings and would sell the remaining vegetables from the garden at the local markets. The children were very interested and asked lots of questions.* *At morning tea the child asked about sharing the vegetables with his teacher and class friends. The children ate samples of the vegetables that then led to discussions about the taste, size, colour, and texture of the vegetables.* *Because of this learning experience and a number of related child-initiated investigations into growing vegetables, the teacher decided to facilitate this learning by helping the children to set up a class project — a vegetable garden. The children decided to sell their vegetables at the local market and collaboratively decided that the money raised would go to their end-of-term party.*	**Early numeracy** • building number knowledge • counting seeds in a packet, the number of plants, the number of times to water weekly • deciding on cost of vegetables • counting using money • building spatial knowledge • exploring patterns in the design of the garden and stall • determining how far apart to plant vegetables • building measurement knowledge • considering size of holes to be dug for the seeds/seedlings • using informal units to measure length and width of the garden bed/market stall. **Links to health & physical learning** **Fine- and gross-motor** • engaging in gardening tasks that use fine- and gross-motor skills. **Making healthy choices** • developing lunch menus that include choices of food from the vegetable garden.

Links to social & personal learning

Personal learning
• developing/maintaining interest, attention and perseverance during the project.

Social learning
• co-planning the project (how, what, where, when and why)
• collaboratively deciding on roles, rights, responsibilities for garden roster
• working cooperatively as a member of a group to care for the garden
• interacting considerately with others
• considering and exploring diverse ways of knowing, thinking and doing.

Links to active learning processes

Thinking
• understanding causes/effects of choices/actions to achieve shared goals
• using thinking and problem-solving processes when collaborating on the gardening project.

Investigating
• questioning past and present practices to care for gardens
• investigating ways of sustaining the garden through environmentally friendly strategies e.g. recycle cartons as mulch in garden.

Imagining and responding
• creating artefacts with a variety of materials to express ideas about the gardening project
• designing/creating posters to advertise the market stall
• experimenting with sounds, voices and props to draw people's attention to the market stall.

Critical reflection about what children learn

Teachers draw on the learning statements from the five early learning areas as they make curriculum decisions. The following questions can help teachers make decisions about what children learn.

Reflecting on decision making

- How do I incorporate children's interests in the learning program?
- How do I help children to build connections between their prior learning and new learning?
- How do I ensure the curriculum is balanced and that children engage in learning from all five early learning areas?
- How do I promote a balance of child-initiated, teacher-initiated, collaboratively planned and spontaneous learning opportunities?
- How do I ensure learning is integrated, meaningful and responsive to children?
- How do I interact to make explicit the learning embedded in experiences?
- Do I use a range of techniques to monitor and assess learning from all early learning areas?
- How do I gather, record, analyse and store evidence of a broad range of learnings?
- How do my values and assumptions shape what has been included/prioritised and excluded in the curriculum?
- How do I encourage children to contribute to collaborative planning about what they will learn, how they will learn and how their learning is assessed?
- What opportunities do I provide for children to represent what they have learnt in a variety of ways?
- How do I help children reflect on and share their learning with others?

Links to other key components

- How do I ensure the curriculum is designed so that it takes into account understandings about children's diverse backgrounds, needs, strengths, interests and abilities?
- How do we involve partners in experiences that develop children's understandings, capabilities and dispositions in the learning areas?
- How do I ensure that the physical, social and temporal environments are planned to support children as they develop deep understandings in the learning areas?
- What range of strategies do I use to promote children's learning within play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching?
- How do I assess learning within play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching?

Equity and diversity

- How do I incorporate and cater for a diverse range of learners within learning experiences?
- How do I incorporate the diverse perspectives of various partners within learning experiences?
- How do I include meaningful opportunities for children to deal with issues related to diversity, biases, stereotypes, inequities and power relationships?

Learning statement overviews for curriculum decision making

This chapter provides an overview for curriculum decision making for each learning statement to assist teachers when planning and assessing children's learning in the Preparatory Year. There are learning statement overviews specific to each early learning area that set out suggestions for:

- planning learning experiences
- teacher interactions
- monitoring and assessing learning, including examples of ways that children may demonstrate learning
- reflecting, including examples of reflective questions to use with children to promote their learning.

Some items are repeated for convenience to ensure that the learning statement overviews act as a ready reference. These are set in italic type.

The learning statement overviews are for teachers to use in designing early years curriculum programs for their particular group of children. The learning statement overviews are not intended for use as planning formats. Teachers may select, modify and create other examples of learning experiences, teaching interactions and assessment examples to develop child-responsive, integrated learning programs that incorporate learning from all the early learning areas.

These integrated programs should incorporate child-initiated, teacher-initiated and collaboratively planned experiences, and be flexible in design to include spontaneous learning situations. The programs should also include opportunities for children to engage in all five contexts for learning — play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching. Relevant, meaningful learning experiences may include negotiated project work, community events and real-life problems.

Further advice about developing programs can be found in the sections "Key components of an effective early years curriculum" and "Exploring decision-making processes".

In addition, early years curriculum materials provide more detailed information about learning experiences and teaching interactions, and ways to monitor and assess learning related to the learning statement overviews.

Social & personal learning: Social learning (sustaining relationships)

Children sustain relationships by:
• acknowledging and negotiating rights, roles and responsibilities in a range of contexts
• cooperating with others in social situations.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• identify and explore their own and others' roles, rights and responsibilities through conversations, discussions, play, collaborative activities, or sharing materials and texts

• engage in a variety of roles, including listener, initiator, facilitator or negotiator, when cooperating with others

• identify and express ideas and feelings about what it means to be a friend

• express ideas and feelings about children's own and others' roles, rights and responsibilities

• collaborate with others to complete tasks and projects

• use and explore social skills including turn-taking, sharing and listening when interacting, collaborating and resolving conflicts with others

• generate ideas about ways to sustain relationships with others through conversation in response to texts, real-life situations and roleplay

• identify how their actions affect others in a variety of ways

• identify and generate possible solutions for social problems that occur in learning contexts

• explore alternative ways to enter and exit interactions with others

• use alternative strategies to try to solve their problems when interacting with others.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• initiate discussions with children about fair and peaceable ways to interact with others — what they "look like", "sound like", and "feel like"

• clearly describe fair and peaceable ways to interact, collaborate and resolve conflicts with others

• use teachable moments to question and challenge children's behaviour if it is stereotypical, biased, or prejudicial to relationships or themselves

• engage children in collaborative decision making about ways to solve social problems arising at school

• reinforce and provide feedback to children about their efforts and successes when solving social problems arising at school

• establish a problem-solving climate in which all children's ideas and feelings about ways to sustain relationships are acknowledged

• discuss new social situations with children

• provide a warm, supportive and accepting learning environment that recognises all partners' efforts and successes in new social situations

• encourage diverse ways of knowing, thinking and doing to sustain relationships with others

• respond to child-initiated requests for assistance to solve social problems

• help children make and apply generalisations from one situation to another when solving social problems at school.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• with some prompts, willingly considers others' ideas, feelings and needs while negotiating in learning situations

• with prompts, reflects on alternative actions that may be used in social situations

• when asked, takes on classroom roles

• with prompts, helps others to be responsible in the learning environment.

• with limited prompts, shares, takes turns, negotiates, follows rules, enters and exits play with peers in familiar situations

• with some prompts, understands, uses and discusses agreed ways of behaving, interacting and communicating in their class

• uses a small range of ways to resolve conflicts in familiar situations, sometimes with prompts

• with help, explains problems and suggests simple options for resolving conflicts.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*

• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*

• *interact with the child*

• *record annotations*

• *communicate with partners including children, parents/carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to these learning statements:

• What things have we learnt about getting on with other people?

• What did we do when we were being responsible?

• What things did we do when we were working well together?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Social & personal learning: Social learning (understanding diversity)

Children build early understandings about diversity by:
• investigating and communicating positively about the social and cultural practices of people in their community.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• express their own needs, feelings and ideas and respond to those of others, in socially and culturally appropriate ways
• explore the diversity of opinions held by self and others, with support
• identify and explore diverse roles in families, home, school and other settings
• identify capabilities, including the talents, needs and interests of self and others
• compare similarities and differences between their own and others' ideas and feelings
• explore and interact positively with people's diversity (including gender, age, capabilities, families, lifestyles, work, cultures, languages, spiritual beliefs and practices) through conversations, discussions, play, responses to texts and visits from local community members
• discuss, question and challenge bias and stereotyping, with support, through conversations, discussions, roleplay and texts
• share their experiences and make links between these and other people's experiences and practices.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• create a "sense of a learning community" by involving all partners meaningfully, respectfully and collaboratively in learning experiences
• use language and plan learning experiences that make children's diverse abilities visible
• negotiate with and make explicit to children what it means to be fair and equitable, e.g. turn taking and respecting others' feelings and ideas when assuming roles
• acknowledge, respect and include diverse traditional and non-traditional roles that reflect children's families and communities, including social and cultural groups to which they belong
• plan learning experiences that build on the social and cultural practices of children, e.g. cooking, craft, language experiences and social experiences
• explore, through stories, songs and images, the variety of roles and occupations of males and females in society
• provide positive contemporary and non-stereotypical cultural images from texts, videos and posters
• adopt a socially just approach when planning for and conversing with children
• model language to describe and celebrate diversity
• be aware of diverse ways children interact with and respond to other children and adults
• discuss and question instances of bias and stereotyping and help children see the effects of their language and behaviour on others
• select learning–teaching resources that depict healthy aspects of social and cultural diversity.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• in group discussions, identifies similarities and differences in the interests, lifestyles and capabilities of familiar people
• participates in discussions about ideas and practices that may be unfair, stereotypical or biased.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
• *interact with the child*
• *record annotations*
• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• What things have we found out about our community that lots of people think are important?
• What are some things that you like or do that are different from what other people like or do?
• What are some things we can do and say that can let someone know that it's all right to be different?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Social & personal learning: Personal learning

Children build a positive sense of self by:
• developing a sense of personal identity as a capable learner
• acting with increasing independence and responsibility towards learning and personal organisation.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• identify, celebrate and share personal successes and new learning
• participate in experiences that raise self-awareness of their identities (including personal, community and national)
• identify the steps required to carry out tasks or communicate needs, feelings or ideas
• carry out tasks by identifying steps, planning, selecting materials and persevering with tasks
• help others plan and carry out tasks
• express understandings about learning independently and help others with their learning
• explore their own and others' needs, feelings and ideas through discussion, roleplays, stories and interactions
• express their feelings, needs and ideas with consideration for the feelings, needs and ideas of others
• explore ways to respond to the feelings, needs and ideas of others, using appropriate language
• take appropriate risks and persevere to complete a new challenge
• manage and negotiate resources, routines, rules and events to operate in both the classroom and social contexts
• learn to cope with changes to routines, environments and people.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• provide visual prompts, e.g. drawings, charts or lists, to help children manage tasks and routines with increasing independence
• reinforce children's approximations and provide feedback about ways to act independently
• work with children and provide suggestions to help them organise tasks into small, manageable steps
• work alongside and provide feedback to children about the ways they took risks and persevered to complete tasks
• negotiate understandings about rules, routines and expectations and ensure these are made explicit to all partners
• encourage children to understand, acknowledge and respond to others' feelings, needs and ideas
• model strategies for seeking assistance from peers or adults and prompt children to use these strategies as needed
• collaborate with children to demonstrate how to plan, gather resources and carry out tasks
• model and encourage children to use appropriate language and non-verbal ways to respond to others' needs, feelings or ideas
• respond to children and give positive feedback about their decisions and interactions with others
• discuss new situations and changes to routines, to help children adapt to them.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• with support, discusses situations and experiences that influence their personal identity as a learner
• expresses some ideas about their identity in relation to their school, community or country
• shows increasing independence and self-confidence when managing and negotiating resources and spaces needed for a variety of learning experiences
• responds positively to occasional encouragement from others
• understands and, with prompts, willingly follows familiar classroom rules, routines and events
• copes with unexpected changes to classroom routines, environments and people, sometimes needing reassurance
• takes increasing responsibility for personal belongings.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
• *interact with the child*
• *record annotations*
• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• What are some things we've learnt to do? What are some things we can do well?
• What did we do today that was new? How did you feel? How did others feel?
• What have you learnt to do for yourselves?
• What did we do when we were being responsible?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Health & physical learning: Making healthy choices

Children build a sense of wellbeing by:
• making choices about their own and others' health and safety with increasing independence.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

- identify and discuss the safety — or lack of safety — in real-life situations
- make choices, with support, in real-life situations to maintain their own and others' safety
- investigate alternative choices that help to maintain personal safety in familiar environments
- act to reduce risks for self and others
- roleplay and visit community services and personnel to explore how those services promote health and safety
- cook and share healthy foods and discuss healthy food choices and ways to balance food choices to stay healthy
- investigate issues or services related to health and safety using a range of information sources
- use texts, songs and games to learn about their bodies, systems and functions and everyday actions that promote their health
- follow simple hygiene routines to help maintain their own and others' health
- investigate the many factors that interact to help maintain health and wellbeing, such as physical activity, resting and sleeping, and eating healthy foods
- discuss parts and systems of the body and how they function to help maintain health and wellbeing
- discuss why people may require medication, and the safety rules related to medication
- investigate leisure and recreation choices that promote healthy living.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

- draw children's attention to and describe safe and unsafe situations indoors and outdoors, and how to make appropriate choices about their safety
- support children to make choices that maintain their own and others' safety in a range of situations
- develop and promote routines that maintain health and safety in a range of situations
- use teachable moments to investigate safe and unsafe situations and encourage children to identify strategies to reduce risks
- question and challenge children's thinking as they investigate and make choices related to their own and others' personal health or safety
- model strategies for children to use in unsafe situations and prompt them to use these strategies, when needed
- organise visits to investigate health-related community services and personnel
- use information technology, texts and roleplay to allow children to engage with health and safety issues
- provide feedback and identify alternatives to help children make healthy choices related to diet, hygiene and lifestyle
- introduce a range of healthy leisure and recreational activities through play, visits, texts and discussions.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

- shows awareness of the need for hygiene, nutrition and maintaining healthy lifestyle across a number of learning contexts
- sometimes encourages others to be aware of hygiene, health and safety.
- with occasional prompts, makes choices to maintain personal safety in familiar situations
- draws on understandings about familiar community health services and personnel during discussions and socio-dramatic play.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

- What did we do to help our friends feel safe?
- What do we think about when we make healthy choices?
- What do we do to look after our bodies?
- Who helped us learn a new way to keep safe and healthy today?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Health & physical learning: Gross-motor

Children build a sense of wellbeing by:
• using and extending gross-motor skills when integrating movements and using equipment.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• build control, strength, flexibility and agility as they move
• explore rocking, sliding, rolling and swinging movements
• develop and combine locomotor skills such as run, walk, jump, hop, crawl, gallop, skip and slide, and non-locomotor skills such as bend, twist, stretch, curl and rock
• incorporate new actions and movements in a range of contexts such as games and adaptations of sports, e.g. soccer, hopscotch
• develop coordination, including hand–eye, foot–eye, eye tracking, and upper and lower body movement
• develop sensory awareness through experimenting with movement
• extend balance control (on and off the ground) including static and dynamic
• adjust movements to negotiate different environments and pathways
• identify and experiment with position of self, others and objects in space
• develop spatial and kinaesthetic awareness by moving in, through, over and around objects and spaces
• use language to describe their position and space in relation to themselves and others
• combine and extend the range of uni-, bi- and cross-lateral movements when climbing, crawling, swinging, pushing
• use objects, equipment and materials to develop throwing, kicking, catching, rolling and striking skills
• plan the layout of outdoor play activities
• participate in games and experiences requiring sustained aerobic activity, e.g. running, skipping, jumping.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• provide a variety of learning experiences of varying complexities that encourage children to develop strength, agility, flexibility, control, balance and coordination
• engage children in increasingly challenging actions that practise and refine locomotor and non-locomotor skills
• encourage children to move through increasingly challenging pathways in a range of settings and demonstrate as appropriate
• model language of position and space
• provide varying levels of assistance in response to children's diverse needs and movements
• scaffold, using oral prompts to help children plan and integrate movements
• engage children in questioning and prompting that encourage them to describe their position in relation to others and objects
• demonstrate new actions and movements for children to use and provide feedback
• plan for and create challenging and stimulating learning environments that facilitate children's experimentation in movement with objects, materials and equipment
• manipulate and adapt sensory elements of the environment.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• uses different movements, positions, actions and changes of direction with increasing confidence, balance and control
• plans and considers movements and alternative pathways in a range of settings with increasing confidence
• willingly persists in hitting, kicking, throwing and catching familiar equipment, with encouragement
• with occasional prompts, visually tracks objects with increasing control and accuracy
• uses increasingly accurate words to describe their position and movements while planning alternative sequences or pathways
• links own movement with an understanding of positional and directional language
• moves through spaces with increasing accuracy.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
• *interact with the child*
• *record annotations*
• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• How did we use our bodies today?
• What new movements did we use today?
• How do we feel when we move this way?
• How did we change the way we moved our bodies?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Health & physical learning: Fine-motor

Children build a sense of wellbeing by:
• using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• integrate gross- and fine-motor movements to carry out a variety of fine-motor actions or tasks

• combine and extend the range of uni-, bi-, and cross-lateral movements involving fingers, wrists, hands, lower and upper arms and shoulders

• build strength, accuracy and control of movements while manipulating objects and materials

• adjust the strength and control of grasp and release actions, when using objects, materials and equipment

• experiment with a range of experiences that develop sensory awareness

• refine control of shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers through fine movements involving repetition and rhythm, e.g. cutting with scissors, rolling dough, clapping to music, climbing a ladder, finger plays

• experiment with new actions and movements involving fingers, wrists, hands, lower and upper arms and shoulders

• refine visual perceptual skills

• refine hand–eye and tracking coordination skills

• use appropriate positioning of fingers, palms, hands, wrist, lower and upper arm to control tools, objects and materials.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• uses familiar equipment, materials, tools and objects with increasing coordination, strength and control (rhythm of movements may still be irregular)

• after explanations and demonstrations, willingly tries to integrate movements or manipulate new/unfamiliar equipment, materials, tools and objects

• has a clear hand preference and a precise grip (that often approximates a mature grip) when manipulating familiar equipment, materials, tools and objects

• uses familiar language to discuss possible ways to manipulate and control different objects, materials and equipment.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*

• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*

• *interact with the child*

• *record annotations*

• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• model alternative combinations of fine and gross movements for a range of tasks, e.g. hand–arm movements (lifting a bucket), hand–wrist movements (cutting paper)

• model and explain movement patterns and provide support for new manipulative tasks

• draw children's attention to the strength of movements needed to work with different types of materials e.g. tough, soft, brittle, or flimsy

• model and evaluate the use of different amounts of strength required to release, grasp or manipulate objects, tools, materials and equipment

• verbally prompt children to integrate and plan movements

• model strategies used to locate different objects, tools and materials in the environment

• collaborate with children to investigate alternative strategies when manipulating objects, tools, materials and equipment

• provide visual perception challenges and games that involve eye tracking

• encourage children to explore, share and model alternative ways to manipulate objects, tools, materials and equipment

• collaborate with children to create environments that have a variety of sensory qualities.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• What did you do with your hands to make this?

• What makes this easy or hard to do?

• What new things can we do with our hands?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Language learning & communication: Oral language

Children expand their oral language by:
- using spoken language (including home language, or signed or augmentative communication) for a range of purposes
- exploring the patterns and conventions of spoken, signed or augmentative language
- interacting with peers and familiar adults using, with support, the conventions associated with formal and informal group settings, including attentive listening.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:
- use language conventions to enter, establish and sustain roles, build relationships, contribute ideas, join and leave social and play situations
- identify, with support, alternative ways to express feelings and needs in conflict situations
- explore the rhythm and rhyme of spoken language, including speech sounds, in a range of learning contexts
- learn new vocabulary and extend language structures in a range of contexts
- discuss language and thinking in groups and as individuals
- discuss observations about other people using languages that sound and look different
- exchange information by providing, and listening for, ideas and information using explanations, descriptions, and recollections to make meaning
- discuss and use, with support, attentive listening and the conventions of speaking and listening (or signed or augmentative communication) used in informal and group settings, including turn taking and attentive listening behaviours
- learn to follow and give simple instructions in games and play.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:
- model, and demonstrate as necessary, language to use for socialising, expressing feelings and needs, and creating ideas
- collaborate with children in play, projects, and activities to extend ideas, vocabulary and sentence structure
- model problem-solving language
- make explicit the speaking and listening practices used in group and social situations
- use teachable moments to develop children's speaking and listening
- support children using signed or augmentative communication systems in social interactions
- engage children in rhyming, chanting, and playing with and hearing the sounds in language
- respond to children's use of new spoken language with supportive feedback
- accept and include languages other than Standard Australian English in the program
- discuss the meanings of gesture and facial expression
- model and encourage the use of thinking aloud when collaborating
- develop children's reasoning through spoken language.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:
- uses some spoken, signed or augmentative strategies to join play and social situations
- can use spoken, signed or augmentative strategies to express needs and feelings, sometimes with prompting
- interprets body language, facial expressions and tone of voice in one-to-one situations
- shows more sustained interest in group times and contributes to the discussions, usually by waiting for a turn to speak
- often contributes ideas and shares information in group settings, responding to others, usually when asked
- follows simple instructions requiring one or two actions with little prompting
- is developing more accurate instructions and descriptions for others to follow in games and play
- is extending vocabulary and sentence structures to compare, classify, explain, describe, imagine and recount events
- enjoys playing with spoken language and identifies rhyming patterns and sounds in language.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:
- What things do we do when we are listening carefully?
- How good are we at listening?
- What might we say to someone when we want to ask for something?
- How do we make sure our friends understand what we are explaining?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Language learning & communication: Reading & viewing

Children become readers and viewers by:
• using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• explore the meanings communicated through symbols and written, visual and multimodal texts

• engage with and respond to a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts

• connect their own experiences with the ideas and information in texts

• investigate the concepts of books and print during experiences with reading and viewing

• use emerging understandings of some symbols, language patterns, conventions, and letter–sound relationships to predict, confirm or make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts

• investigate the conventions of reading and viewing electronic texts

• discuss why a particular text has been chosen for a particular situation

• use different types of texts for a range of personal and group purposes, including recipes, stories, information texts and song lists

• use in their play, personal observations of real-life purposes and processes associated with reading and viewing

• retell familiar stories and video texts using pictures, felt or magnetic images

• explore and question, with support, stereotypical and biased representations of people, characters and places.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• read literature to children as an everyday event and a pleasurable experience

• use a range of text types as part of researching and following instructions

• use catalogues in play, real-life situations and investigations

• link experiences in texts, including written, multimodal and visual texts, to children's personal experience and imagination

• build prior knowledge and use predictable texts to teach early reading behaviours

• work alongside children to explore the conventions of electronic texts

• use teachable moments to respond to and extend children's understandings of written language

• work alongside children as they experiment with reading and viewing experiences

• question bias and stereotyping in familiar texts, with children

• make explicit the patterns, conventions and letter–sound relationships in texts, while reading and writing.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• predicts the topic of paper-based, electronic and video texts from illustrations and prior knowledge, when collaboratively reading or viewing

• focuses on making meaning from symbols, familiar words and pictures rather than from reading the print, when reading and viewing

• retells a favourite story from memory, although not always in sequence, or shares information using some written language patterns from paper-based, electronic or video texts

• retells segments of familiar stories while playing with felt or magnetic story pieces

• reads and views for personal purposes

• demonstrates concepts of book and print when reading and viewing self-chosen texts, including holding the book the right way, turning pages, looking at pictures, and identifying the difference between a letter and a word

• "reads" some familiar words in charts, signs, packages or books, but may not recognise them out of their context

• during shared reading, uses knowledge of topic, visual cues, familiar words and some known letter–sound relationships to join in

• discusses images and colour in different forms of television or video texts, or computer programs

• knows the names of most letters of the alphabet

• uses the terms "words" and "letters" correctly

• can match some identified sounds in words to letters

• during discussions, identifies and discusses how representations in texts of people, places, objects and events are depicted unfairly and inaccurately.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*

• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*

• *interact with the child*

• *record annotations*

• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• What are some things we like reading? Why do we want to read?

• What do we know about … ?
(e.g. reading, letters, words, books, computer games)

• Why do authors put pictures in books? In computer programs?

• Why did the author use this word?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Language learning & communication: Writing & shaping

Children become writers and shapers by:
- experimenting with emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to communicate meanings.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

- explore how symbols, and written and visual texts are used to communicate meanings
- share their representations and discuss why their personal symbol systems may not be understood by others
- develop understandings of the links between spoken/signed language and written language through collaborative experiences where ideas and experiences are discussed and written down
- develop understandings of the relationships between letters and sounds/finger-spelling during experiences with writing
- use in their play, their observations of the real-life purposes and processes associated with writing and shaping electronic texts
- construct and co-construct different types of texts for a range of personal and group purposes
- express and represent personal feelings, ideas and creativity through body movements, sound, and two- and three-dimensional representations
- experiment with conventional letters, speech sounds, words, signs or symbols of augmentative communication to convey meaning
- collaboratively innovate on texts to explore the composing process
- discuss why texts are constructed for different purposes.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

- model writing while co-constructing texts for a range of purposes
- involve children in producing multimodal texts
- create word-rich environments filled with meaningful messages
- accept and encourage children's personal efforts to represent and symbolise experiences
- discuss with children possible uses of the range of writing and shaping materials provided in various outdoor and indoor settings
- transcribe children's texts while discussing the writing process
- use teachable moments to respond to and extend children's understandings of written language
- work alongside children as they experiment with writing and shaping experiences
- respond to the child's intentions as they write and shape
- respond to children's questions about their writing.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

- understands that shaping and writing are useful and purposeful activities
- discusses dominant features of familiar texts during shared writing
- uses body movement, sound, and two- and three-dimensional representations to communicate meaning
- identifies a number of ways to communicate
- uses writing approximations, drawings or alternative augmentative forms of communication to share ideas and information, seeking help when needed
- demonstrates an emerging understanding of some sound–letter relationships when writing for personal purposes
- identifies a small number of letter names and sounds, in scaffolded situations
- can point to a letter or word when asked
- usually uses the initial sounds of words in their writing
- can sometimes identify what is meant by "first" and "last" letter, "starts with"
- experiments with letters, words, symbols and/or drawings to write or shape simple texts
- writes from left to right
- can point to where print begins when asked
- types own name using keyboard
- uses the terms "letters", "words" and "numbers" accurately.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

- What are some ways we record and share our ideas?
- What do we know about writing? About letters? About words?
- When are some times we want to record and share messages/ ideas?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Early mathematical understandings: Early numeracy

Children build early mathematical understandings about number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data and space by:
- investigating and communicating about quantities and their representations, and attributes of objects and collections
- investigating and communicating about position, movement and direction
- investigating and communicating about order, sequence and pattern.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:
- match and describe characteristics, attributes and representations for patterns, objects and collections
- sort and classify objects, and describe a characteristic of the collection, such as number, shape, colour, texture, size or function
- make patterns of repeated sequences, such as decorative patterns and sequences in movements, songs, games, manipulative play, routines and stories
- compare attributes and quantities in collections using comparative language
- order and describe sequences of actions, events, patterns, routines and transitions, and numbers in manipulative play, songs and games
- represent and describe early mathematical ideas using objects, pictures, drawings, text, child-created symbols and numbers
- explain mathematical thinking and reasoning for decision making and problem solving
- use information and communication technologies to explore quantities and their representations, position, movement, direction, order, sequence and pattern.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:
- discuss mathematical explorations, and thinking and reasoning, collaboratively
- model mathematical language and ways to represent mathematical ideas
- develop and extend the language of mathematics
- make explicit, strategies used for counting collections and identifying "How many?"
- give explicit prompts and support to assist the recall of beginning mathematical ideas
- draw attention to the mathematics in everyday situations
- acknowledge effort, interest, learning and experimentation with mathematical ideas
- ask children what support they need
- discuss approximations of early mathematical ideas and modify understandings as required
- encourage others to support mathematical thinking, reasoning and experimentation
- encourage children to reflect on their mathematical thinking and reasoning in different situations and contexts
- question thinking and reasoning by asking "why" and "how" questions
- encourage children to find ways of representing their mathematical ideas
- use teachable moments to draw children's attention to mathematical aspects of their activities
- reflect on the situation or learning experience and decide how to extend and deepen the learning.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:
- counts small collections in different arrangements and from different starting points
- recognises familiar numbers
- identifies how many in a small collection
- recognises the required number of items needed to complete a planned task
- recognises parts of a whole
- identifies collections with exaggerated differences for "more" or "less"
- represents the quantities of small collections in different ways
- imitates exchange processes as part of play
- identifies and describes attributes of objects as long, short, empty, full, heavy, light
- uses comparative language when comparing two objects or pictures
- sorts collections by single attributes such as shape, colour or size of objects
- identifies and describes attributes of objects according to shape
- uses familiar positional language to communicate own position, the position of others and objects
- interprets familiar language of position to place or locate objects
- identifies the repeating element of a simple pattern and continues pattern
- identifies patterns in the environment
- follows a simple sequence of actions, or pattern, in order
- represents sequences of familiar events
- identifies points in time, with prompts
- in discussions, sometimes identifies that an event might or might not happen
- identifies ways of collecting data to confirm assumptions and answer own questions.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:
- How can we find out the most popular … ?
- How can we share what we found out?
- How did you work out what came next in your pattern?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Active learning processes: Thinking

Children think and enquire by:
• generating and discussing ideas and plans and solving problems.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• investigate and discuss when and how to use a range of thinking processes
• recall and make connections between experiences, ideas and processes to manage new situations
• transfer knowledge, ideas and processes from one situation to another
• test ideas, observe, predict, hypothesise and infer relationships
• analyse and synthesise information
• reflect, with support, on actions, ideas, processes and decisions to inform future actions and decisions
• evaluate and begin to make critical judgments, with support, about decisions, actions and interactions used to solve problems
• plan, gather and organise information to help manage a task or situation, or solve a real-life problem
• plan actions and processes to help manage a task or situation, or solve a real-life problem
• ask questions to clarify meanings, gather more information and challenge others' ideas
• identify the problem that needs to be solved and the important features of the problem
• consider alternative ideas, processes or actions and divergent perspectives
• solve problems and think through ways to find out about and make sense of familiar environments
• choose, with support, how and when to use information and communication technologies to help solve problems or find information
• generate alternative actions and processes and make choices between alternatives that may help them to manage a task or situation, or solve a real-life problem.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• use, and help children to use, an explicit language to discuss thinking processes and problem solving
• provide opportunities for children to encounter new and different types of problems using different materials, processes and thinking strategies
• question children about their strategies — "How do you know?" "How did you work out that problem?" and "Why did you do it that way?"
• model or teach alternative ways to generate ideas, plan, and transfer ideas, processes and knowledge to new situations
• use teachable moments to reinforce or model particular thinking or problem-solving strategies
• challenge children to use different ways of thinking or solving problems
• reinforce and provide feedback to children on their use of thinking processes and problem-solving strategies
• model a language for reflecting and critically judging thinking and problem solving
• celebrate with children and help them appreciate their own and others' ways of solving problems and approaching thinking challenges
• collaborate with children to investigate, consider what might happen and evaluate what did happen
• identify similarities and differences in the ways children approach problems or thinking challenges.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• asks questions about and explores possible explanations for relationships by making inferences, comparing and contrasting, seeing cause and effect, and observing part-whole relationships, in collaboration with others
• makes simple plans and chooses materials and actions, asking for help when needed
• gathers information and explores information sources, including using communication and information technology (ICT), in collaboration with others
• with some prompts, makes links between prior experiences and familiar information to help solve a problem, manage a task, choose an action or choose materials
• uses known strategies to solve familiar problems, often with scaffolding from others
• identifies some obvious features of a problem and works with a more experienced person to generate and try out a solution
• is beginning to formulate a plan for solving a personal problem
• in discussion with others, talks about thinking and ways to solve problems using familiar specific language that has been modelled.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

  • *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
  • *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
  • *interact with the child*
  • *record annotations*
  • *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• What were some of the ideas we used to solve this problem?
• How did we let others know about our ideas and our plans?
• What are the different ways we can use to show people our ideas?
• Did our ideas help to solve this problem or will we need to try again?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

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Active learning processes: Investigating the natural world

Children think and enquire by:
• investigating their ideas about phenomena in the natural world
• developing shared understandings about these phenomena.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

• observe and discuss some features of and changes in familiar natural environments (on the ground and in the sky)

• experiment with forces and explore where they experience and use forces in daily life, e.g. ways to move objects and self, magnetic forces and forms of energy

• investigate and describe features and needs of living things and familiar environments

• investigate and describe observable features of materials, changes in materials and ways to use materials

• use a variety of ways to collect information and represent ideas about natural phenomena, with assistance

• conduct simple experiments and observations, with assistance

• express own ideas about natural phenomena and become aware of other ways to understand the phenomena

• use information and communication technologies to investigate other ways to understand phenomena

• begin to use scientific language for describing observable features of familiar natural environments, forces, living things and materials.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

• participates in simple investigations using familiar tools and equipment

• makes predictions and observations

• in discussions, shares personal understandings, poses questions and wonders about the natural world

• with prompts, selects ways to represent understandings about the natural world in different ways.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

• *observe and analyse what the child is doing*

• *listen to and reflect on what the child says*

• *interact with the child*

• *record annotations*

• *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

• recognise and build on children's prior knowledge about natural phenomena

• support child-initiated explorations of natural phenomena

• encourage children and provide resources, time and space to allow children to collaboratively collect information, plan and conduct experiments and represent ideas in their own ways

• use explicit scientific language to describe features of natural environments, forces, living things and materials

• think aloud while demonstrating ways to experiment or represent ideas

• use teachable moments to investigate features of, and changes in, environments

• assist children to find ways to communicate about and represent information, observations and experiments

• question children to focus observations and help them to share their personal ideas about natural phenomena

• draw children's attention to other ways of understanding or thinking about natural phenomena

• share texts to stimulate or challenge thinking or introduce scientific language

• break down tasks to help children manage or consider variables when experimenting

• help children reflect on what they know or want to know, and how they could or did find out and consider other possibilities.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

• How did we find out about …?

• What did we find out about … today?

• How can we show other people what we found out?

• Who would like to show us how the experiment with … worked?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Active learning processes: Investigating technology

Children think and enquire by:
- investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

- identify technology as products or ways of doing things (artefacts, systems, services, processes and environments)
- investigate products of technology and make connections with ways products are used in everyday life (e.g. candles, electric lights, emails and computers)
- investigate ways technology is used in their local areas (systems such as garbage collection, factories that manufacture goods, designed environments e.g. parks; mobile phone network.)
- reflect on and discuss how technologies affect people's lives
- use a range of technologies, including computers, to support their interactions with others
- investigate ways that information and communication technologies can be used to communicate (email, telephone, television, internet, radio).

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

- use explicit language to support children to reflect on technologies and the impact of using them
- give children every opportunity and encouragement to use different technologies
- question and challenge children's thinking about technologies, and the use of those technologies in their everyday life
- work collaboratively with children to make different products using different processes
- provide opportunities to learn and use information and communication technologies to meet personal or learning needs
- challenge stereotyping and question bias related to the roles people take when using technologies
- help children to think about the ways technologies may change and the impact this may have on them, their families and others
- inquire together about technologies, their impacts, and the ways they are developed and used by different people
- break down tasks into parts to help children interact with familiar technologies in a range of contexts
- think aloud to model ways to solve problems using technologies.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

- talks about and creates own products and systems from their observations and use of technology, asking for help when needed
- in discussions, identifies ways in which technology helps people in everyday life
- is willing to use information and communication technologies to meet personal or learning needs
- with prompts, can use computers for different purposes in the learning environment.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:

- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

- What things did we use today that have been made by another person?
- Who uses these things and what do they use them for?
- How can we be responsible when we use these things?
- Was there a better way of getting this job done?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Active learning processes: Investigating environments

Children think and enquire by:
• investigating features of, and ways to sustain, environments.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:

- identify and express ideas and feelings about how their needs are met by features (people, objects, places and events) in familiar environments (natural, built, social and virtual)
- compare similarities and differences between features of environments
- explore alternative ways to meet their needs in different environments and situations
- plan and design ways to care for familiar environments
- use information and communication technologies to explore and share ideas about how environments may be sustained
- inquire about topics relating to environments
- investigate personal and collective actions (past and present) that may help or hinder maintenance of familiar environments (causes and effects)
- imagine and express ideas about personal and collective actions that reflect preferred futures
- act on personal and collective plans to care for familiar environments.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:

- is beginning to show a desire to care for people, objects and living things in the immediate environment
- in group discussions, identifies ways to take care of people, objects and living things in the home, classroom and community environment
- with prompts, willingly contributes to caring for the classroom environment.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
- *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
- *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
- *interact with the child*
- *record annotations*
- *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

- draw children's attention to, and describe, similarities and differences between aspects of environments as they relate to children's everyday lives
- model language and actions about ways to meet children's needs, and discuss the causes and effects of children's actions
- question children about their ideas, thoughts and feelings about familiar environmental concerns and issues, through conversations and discussions about texts and real-life events
- engage children in collaborative, real-life class and community experiences that demonstrate ways to care for familiar environments
- use a variety of open-ended questions that challenge children to solve problems and seek innovative ways to view environments
- model the use of information and communication technologies, e.g. internet, to access information about ways to sustain environments
- model ways to "generate", "act upon" and "evaluate" ideas, while investigating ways to care for and sustain environments
- evaluate, with children, the impact of various actions on environments
- involve partners in the learning community to discuss and investigate with children why we need to sustain environments
- encourage children to think about how they can act positively to create preferred futures, e.g. conversations about ways to sustain environments
- verbalise thinking and plans for caring for familiar environments
- plan collaboratively with children, actions or projects that help to maintain a familiar environment
- reflect with children on how they participated in projects and other actions to care for environments
- encourage children to critically reflect on their own and others' personal philosophies and theories about environments.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

- How could we find out about houses people live in?
- What do the pictures of different houses we found tell us about where people live?
- How could we show other people what we found out?
- What did we find out about responsible ways to use water? How can we use water responsibly?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.

Active learning processes: Imagining and responding

Children generate, represent and respond to ideas, experiences and possibilities by:
• experimenting with materials and processes in a variety of creative, imaginative and innovative ways
• discussing and responding to the qualities of their own and others' representations, experiences and artistic works.

Suggestions for **planning**

With children, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which children:
• experiment with materials, processes, tools, movement, sounds or props as they construct and create
• explore different sources of information and ways to present and share information
• represent ideas and experiences by creating drawings, roleplays, movement sequences, musical interpretations, models, diagrams and maps
• respond to situations and problems by imagining or envisioning alternatives and new possibilities
• explore and play with colour, line, shape, texture, size, and repetition as they draw, paint, print, sculpt and model
• sing a range of songs, play musical games, share a range of music, and experiment with ways to create music using instruments
• explore and play with rhythm, beat, pitch, tempo and dynamics in music
• use information and communication technologies to explore artistic elements, processes and techniques
• work collaboratively on a project or real-life problem as they generate, act upon, and evaluate ideas, designs and actions
• co-create new indoor and outdoor environments
• reflect on artistic experiences and respond to their own and others' artworks
• explore aesthetic and sensory qualities of environments, objects and their own and others' artistic works
• identify a variety of ways in which people, animals, places, and experiences are represented through the arts.

Suggestions for **interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:
• tell children strategies to use to visualise, envision and use imagination
• provide opportunities for children to innovate and engage with new ideas, processes, materials, movements and environments
• negotiate projects with children and provide suitable space, time, resources and support
• identify real-life problems to be solved, and break down tasks to help children design or represent possible solutions
• model ways to generate and represent ideas verbally, visually (plans, maps, diagrams, top view perspective, constructions, paintings) or through roleplay, movement and music
• think aloud to explain the steps or processes used when designing, or representing ideas or designs
• challenge children to use different ways to represent ideas and designs, and to consider other possibilities
• model language used to evaluate designs and choices about representations
• negotiate with children, ways to display or present designs to familiar audiences
• draw attention to other possibilities and value other people's ideas
• question children to help them to reflect on how they generated or represented ideas
• model language for reflecting on and expressing ideas and feelings in response to artistic experiences
• provide opportunities to create artistic works and displays using artistic and aesthetic qualities
• discuss similarities and differences in the ways people respond to artistic experiences and aesthetic qualities.

Suggestions for **monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the child:
• with some prompts, experiments with generating ideas and imaginative designs for play and real-life purposes
• with prompts, describes features and functions of their own or others' imaginative designs and plans
• with some prompts, experiments with using different ways to imaginatively represent experiences, ideas and designs, usually with enjoyment
• with some prompts, experiments with ways to represent ideas, feelings and enjoyment through singing and playing simple musical instruments
• with prompts, describes some features of interest in their own or others' artworks and representations using some specific language associated with the arts
• in discussions, finds ways to describe responses to different forms and styles of artistic works and ways to represent ideas.

Teachers monitor a child's learning in relation to the learning statements as they:
  • *observe and analyse what the child is doing*
  • *listen to and reflect on what the child says*
  • *interact with the child*
  • *record annotations*
  • *communicate with partners including children, parents/ carers and others.*

Teachers gather evidence about a child's learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Suggestions for **reflecting**

Adults and children might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:
• How did we use our imaginations today?
• What interesting ways did we use to record or share our ideas?
• What was something new that we tried or learnt or discovered about … ? (e.g. moving, making music, singing, using paint, making things, pretending to be another person, etc.)

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgments about children's learning, and their planning for future learning experiences.
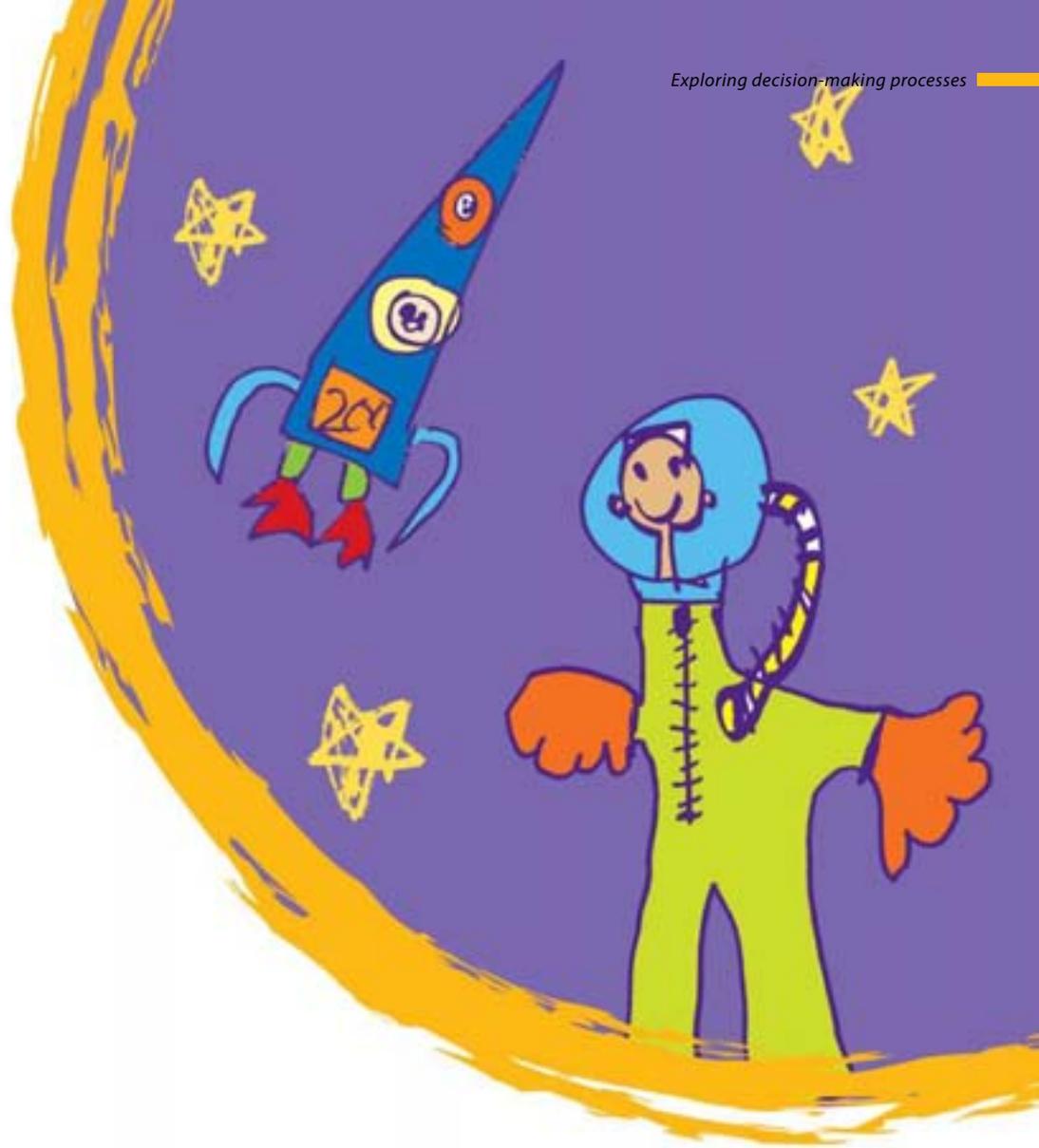
Exploring decision-making processes

This chapter provides detailed advice on the four interactive processes of curriculum decision making:

- Planning
- Interacting
- Monitoring & assessing
- Reflecting.

There are many different starting points for decision making. Many teachers, for example, begin by *reflecting* on what they know about children and their local setting, and these reflections inform their decisions about *planning, interacting* and *monitoring and assessing.* Decisions are interconnected and each decision leads to other decisions, questions and issues that shape ongoing actions and choices.

Figure 2 (repeated): The interactive nature of curriculum decision making
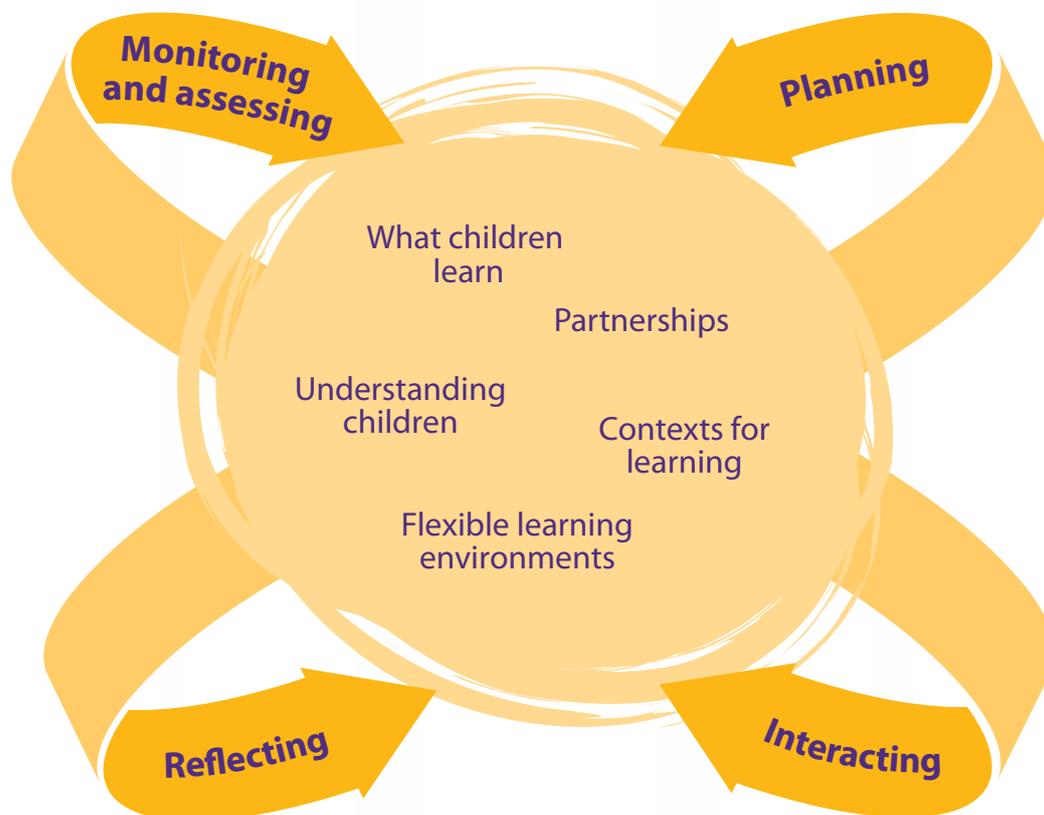
Planning

Planning must be focused on promoting integrated learning. It requires flexibility and is negotiated with a range of partners. As they plan, teachers assume many roles, as explored in Table 1, including practitioner, negotiator, collaborator, observer and documenter.

Planning occurs across different timeframes including:

- planning as preparation (long- and short-term planning)
- on-the-spot planning as teachers, children and other partners learn together.

It is also essential to record plans to ensure that key decisions, intentions, actions and results of those actions are clearly identified. This may be done before and/or after learning interactions, as appropriate.

Planning helps teachers to:

- build continuity between past, present and future learning
- ensure that learning is relevant to children and the local community

- balance the number of child-initiated, teacher-initiated, collaboratively planned and spontaneous learning opportunities
- create opportunities for children to make choices
- focus and select teaching interactions that increase the intellectual quality of learning experiences
- make learning embedded in learning experiences clear and explicit
- systematically integrate assessment into learning–teaching processes
- allocate time and plan processes that promote reflection on learning, teaching and assessment.

Teachers plan in relation to each of the five key components:

- to build and use understandings about children to inform program planning
- to build partnerships
- to establish flexible physical, social and temporal environments that promote learning
- to create a range of contexts for learning and development with partners
- to select and describe "what children learn", drawing on the learning statement overviews and ensuring a balance between the five early learning areas.

There are many ways that teachers can record their long-term and short-term plans. Teachers need to document plans in practical and time-efficient ways that take into account:

- their need to systematically think through learning, teaching and assessment options
- the need to communicate and share planning and decision making with other partners
- community, school and systemic demands and priorities.

In addition, teachers need to plan to engage partners in decision making to support children's learning and development, as set out in Table 11.

Table 11: Ways for teachers to engage partners in decision making

Children	Collaboratively planning with children. Sharing ideas about what they have learnt, are learning and want to learn. Sharing ideas about ways they would like to learn, and how learning could be assessed. Modifying and negotiating aspects of the physical, social or temporal environments. Negotiating some contexts for learning, including play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching. Helping to decide how to document or share learning with others.
Parents and carers	Sharing information about long- and short-term plans, using a variety of ways that are open-ended and invite parents and carers to comment, suggest alternatives, share different perspectives, and make links to home and community experiences. Using displays to share group learning, or folios, work samples and photographs to share individual children's learning in ways that allow parents to add to and comment on their child's learning.
Colleagues	Using information from informal discussions with teacher aides to help decide the direction of future planning or interactions. Sharing longer-term plans to allow teacher aides to suggest alternatives Collaboratively planning specialist lessons drawing on the five key components, learning area overviews, as well as specialist teacher knowledge. Sharing plans with administrators and other staff to promote continuity in learning. Negotiating ways to work with specialist advisory teachers, guidance officers and therapists to build continuity for children.
Other educational professionals	Networking with other early childhood professionals to discuss emerging issues, meet professional development needs. Coordinate programs to promote continuity of learning experiences for children.

Interacting

Teachers constantly make decisions about how to interact with children and other partners. These decisions are both planned and spontaneous as teachers respond to emerging and changing situations and use teachable moments. As teachers choose interactions, they need to be aware of their particular perspectives about children, learning and teaching, as well as the different teaching roles they engage in as they promote learning.

Teachers interact for a range of purposes including:

- building the intellectual quality of learning experiences
- collaboratively planning and reflecting on learning with children
- ensuring that environments remain supportive of children and other partners
- promoting connectedness between prior, past and future learning, as well as building continuity between home, community and classroom learning
- recognising and engaging with diversity.

Teachers use a range of interactions to scaffold children's learning, as set out in Table 12.

Table 12: Interactions for scaffolding learning

Types of interactions	Examples of specific interactions
Facilitating	• modelling and demonstrating techniques and strategies • using teachable moments • providing opportunities for choice • supporting child-initiated explorations, investigations and play • providing supportive feedback on attempts and approximations • adjusting interactions to enable children to demonstrate different outcomes within particular learning contexts • breaking down tasks and prompting for the next step • providing environments for independent and collaborative learning • involving partners in facilitating learning.
Collaborating as a learning partner	• collaborating and working alongside children • inquiring and investigating together • involving other partners in the learning and decision making • celebrating successes together • negotiating and collaboratively planning projects and experiences • listening to children and responding to their questions and ideas • co-constructing understandings • communicating what children are learning to other partners.
Making learning explicit	• making language and thinking strategies explicit • discussing and explaining meanings and ideas • directing attention to important aspects of the situation or task • engaging with, using and responding to texts • verbalising and modelling thinking and problem-solving strategies • teaching and instructing in child-responsive ways.
Building connections	• drawing on children's prior knowledge and making links to new experiences • assisting children to make connections between experiences • drawing children's attention to learning and everyday situations in which learning is used • identifying features, similarities and differences • gathering information from other partners to help build connections between home, communities and classrooms.
Extending children's thinking to develop deep understandings	• questioning to support children as they examine bias and stereotyping • challenging children to consider other points of view and practices • including diverse ideas, perspectives and alternatives • extending children's thinking through using a variety of open-ended questions • assisting children to reflect and evaluate • developing a language for talking about thinking and how we know and understand the world • questioning children to help them verbalise their thinking or explain how they know • assisting children to pose and solve problems • engaging children in imagining and generating possibilities • engaging in substantive conversations with children • involving other partners in building the intellectual quality of learning experiences.

Reflecting

Reflecting on practice involves teachers reflecting personally, as well as reflecting with other partners including children, colleagues, parents/carers and community members.

Personal reflection

Personal reflection gives teachers the opportunity to examine critically how their histories, knowledges, and professional and personal perspectives shape and may limit their practice. Teachers consider:

- how values, beliefs, biases and assumptions influence:
  — views about children, learning, teaching, teachers' roles
  — what knowledge is included and excluded
  — responses to competing priorities, demands and alternatives
  — child agency and voice
  — responses to and views about diversity
  — how information is collected, interpreted and acted upon
- how they integrate decisions about the key components:
  — understanding children
  — building partnerships
  — establishing flexible learning environments
  — creating contexts for learning and development
  — exploring what children learn and the balance of learning across five early learning areas
- how effective their decision making is, including choices about:
  — planning, and documenting plans
  — interacting
  — monitoring and assessing learning
  — reflecting on children's learning and program planning
- how they can meet their professional development needs
- how their decisions help to promote equity, and reflect and respond to diverse perspectives and experiences.

Reflection with children

Reflection with children about learning is also important and gives form to decision making. Teachers support children's reflection by:

- modelling and verbalising thinking and language used for reflecting
- scaffolding reflection using photographs, diagrams, comments and questions, diaries and plans
- helping them identify things they have learnt

- developing interest in sharing ideas about learning with others
- providing opportunities to share reflections and responses in a variety of ways, for example, drawing, painting, talking and roleplaying.

Reflection with colleagues

Reflection with colleagues occurs during informal and formal interactions with teacher aides, other staff members, specialist personnel and administrators. Networking with colleagues also provides opportunities for early childhood professionals to reflect on their decisions and practices, while helping to meet professional development needs.

Reflection with parents, carers and community members

Reflection with parents, carers and community members involves providing alternative ways for these partners to think and discuss learning programs and aspects of the curriculum. Parents, for example, can often help teachers to identify situations or topics that a child has engaged in actively and those they show less interest in. Parents may also be able to identify how a child has transferred learning from one context to another and express views about how learning could be enhanced through community involvement. Partners' reflections can be shared through informal and formal, oral and written communications. These reflections become a starting point for further negotiations of curriculum decisions.

While reflection often involves "self talk", during and/or after interactions, it is also important for some reflections to be recorded. Documenting reflections allows ideas, relationships, issues and possibilities to be explored, clarified and revisited. Reflection is an integral part of teaching, and is essential when adopting the roles of teacher as action researcher and lifelong learner.

Monitoring and assessing

Monitoring and assessing is part of ongoing curriculum decision making. The assessment approach described here has three components, each of which describes children's learning from a different perspective:

- *learning statements* describe the focus of the learning
- the *individual folio* describes what a child has been learning
- the *early learning record* (ELR) summarises the distance travelled in a child's learning and is used to report to the child's next teacher.

Working in partnership enables teachers, parents and children to develop shared understandings about assessment. Partnerships that effectively support assessment require trusting relationships. Strategies teachers can use to build partnerships that support monitoring and assessing of children's learning include:

- providing feedback to children on their progress during learning experiences, thereby showing what is expected of them, and giving verbal encouragement
- reflecting with children about their learning, negotiating how that learning can be recorded during or after the learning experiences and deciding how this learning could be shared with others; for example, by selecting a piece of work to include in a folio, writing a message, or taking a photograph for display to parents
- keeping parents informed about the purposes of monitoring and assessment, and seeking information from parents that may be useful to support or make judgments about children's learning
- sharing information and judgments about learning with parents and children
- communicating with colleagues about their understandings of particular children.

Assessment is shaped by teachers' values, and their perspectives on children, learning and teaching, as well as the power relationships that operate as partners learn together. Developing shared understandings and including children in assessment processes helps to build a common view of what is being learnt and assessed and why this learning is valuable. This allows children to become more aware of their own learning and empowers them as they continue to learn. Teachers can also introduce thinking processes and language that children can draw on as they engage in self- and peer-assessment.

Purposes of monitoring and assessing

Monitoring and assessing is an integral part of the learning–teaching process and is not a separate activity. The information gathered is used to:

- plan for future learning
- build a picture of a child's learning and development
- give direction to conversations with the child, parents or carers, specialist teachers, the child's next teacher and other professional colleagues

- record point-in-time judgments using the early learning record and report on these.

It is important that children have opportunities to demonstrate their learning in the full range of learning contexts. In the Preparatory Year, it is unnecessary to develop separate assessment tasks since children's everyday learning experiences offer rich opportunities for gathering evidence of their learning. Pencil-and-paper "tests" are not appropriate methods of gathering information in the Preparatory Year.

The four steps involved in monitoring and assessing, and reporting on children's learning are identified below.

Step 1: Gathering evidence of children's learning

Teachers monitor and assess by gathering information and evidence over time to build an overall picture of children's learning. Teachers:

- observe children as they learn
- talk with children about their learning
- help children identify what they have learnt
- gather the things children produce during their learning
- comment on children's learning in relation to the curriculum
- have formal and informal discussions with parents, carers, and professional colleagues.

Step 2: Using folios to organise evidence about children's learning

Teachers and children organise evidence of learning in individual folios. The individual folio is co-constructed as an ongoing process between a teacher, a child, parents/carers and other partners. It becomes a dynamic record of examples of a child's learning and development in the Preparatory Year. The individual folio may contain:

- notes of conversations with children
- anecdotal records
- personalised checklists with comments
- images or recordings, e.g. photographs, video or audio recordings
- objects or artefacts that children develop or make
- notes of discussions with other partners.

Teachers should plan ahead to identify learning experiences that enable them to gather evidence of children's learning related to the learning statements. A collection of random observations and examples of children's work can be difficult to manage. The folio should contain selected evidence that best reflects the child's understandings, capabilities and dispositions. The folio's contents will inform future planning and judgment-making for the early learning record.

Collected evidence should be annotated to help with later analysis. Annotations need to briefly describe the evidence as well as draw attention to the focus of the learning (learning area or learning statements) and the context (play, real-life, investigations, routines and transitions, focused learning) in which it took place.

Individual teachers need to find a balance between the amount of information they require for later analysis and the amount of time available to make these annotations. Different teachers will annotate in different ways depending on personal experience, preferences, and teaching contexts.

Step 3: Interpreting evidence of children's learning in folios

Teachers interpret evidence of children's learning to inform daily planning and to make overall judgments about how far children have come in relation to the learning statements. For daily planning, teachers may look at a single piece of evidence, whereas to make overall judgments, they will consider evidence gathered over time in relation to a learning statement. Interpreting the evidence in the folios supports curriculum decision making because it provides teachers with:

• information about children when planning for future learning

• focuses for conversations with the child, parents or carers, specialist teachers, Year 1 teachers and other professional colleagues

• information and evidence for the judgments made about a child's learning and development

• a basis on which to write comments about the contexts and phases of learning in the early learning record.

Step 4: Using the early learning record to report on children's learning

The early learning record (ELR) documents judgments made about a child's learning in relation to the learning statements. Reflecting on the judgments recorded in the ELR supports the teacher to build an overall picture of the child's learning. Teachers should complete the ELR at least twice a year for each child to monitor the child's overall progress. The ELR also provides a focus for communication with parents or carers about learning and development.

Year 1 teachers can gain an overall picture of a child's learning and development across a range of contexts from the ELR. This enables these teachers to plan for a smooth transition from the Preparatory Year to Year 1 and to develop appropriate programs to support ongoing learning.

The ELR uses four phases to describe a continuum of learning in relation to the learning statements:

- **Becoming aware**
- **Exploring**
- **Making connections**
- **Applying.**

Feedback from teachers has shown that children are generally in the "Making connections" phase by the end of the Preparatory Year across the early learning areas. Children do, however, vary in their learning and will be at different phases for some learning statements, depending on their experience prior to starting Prep and their interest in the learning area. The phase continuum leads to Level 1 of the KLA syllabuses.

Table 13 describes the conceptual framework for this continuum, which is based on:

- children's progress from personalised understandings to developing shared understandings
- the level of support required to engage with the knowledge described in the learning statements
- the degree to which the child can use the knowledge of the learning statement in different contexts.

Table 13: The conceptual framework for the phases of learning

Becoming aware

Children:

- rely on their personal observations and habitual behaviour
- need explicit support to engage with the knowledge of the learning statement
- use their learning within a single familiar context.

Children become aware of new things in their lives. They watch and listen to an activity, and discuss new objects, representations, people and practices. They may randomly explore the attributes of new materials.

Exploring

Children:

- construct personal understandings
- need support to engage with the knowledge of the learning statement
- use their learning within familiar contexts.

Children explore new objects, representations and social practices for their own purposes.

Making connections

Children:

- make connections between their personal understandings and commonly accepted understandings
- need some prompts to engage with and talk about the knowledge of the learning statement
- are beginning to transfer their learning across familiar contexts.

Children begin to represent their ideas and understandings.

Applying

Children:

- more readily recall and explain their conceptual understandings
- apply their knowledge of the learning statement independently
- confidently transfer their learning across familiar contexts.

Children confidently plan, explain and reflect on their learning.

When recording judgments in the ELR, teachers will need to consider the information in the individual folio. They consider the range of evidence gathered over time to build an overall picture of a child's learning and development, and make judgments about the phases in which a child may be operating.

When used as part of ongoing monitoring, the ELR supports curriculum decision making for teachers by providing:

- information about children who may need to revisit an aspect of an early learning area or require different types of interactions
- a point-in-time overview of the particular phases that describe a child's learning
- information that can guide the choice of interactions that will be most effective in supporting a child's learning
- information for schools making decisions about resourcing and support for teachers.

The ELR can also provide a focus for conversations with parents and carers, and form the basis for a written end-of-year report.

Two versions of the ELR are provided in Appendix 2. Other layouts are available electronically in the *Teacher's CD–ROM: Early years curriculum materials*. These include templates for electronic folios incorporating an ELR. Teachers may adapt these templates to meet individual school contexts.

Learning statement rubrics

The monitoring and assessing process in this section of the *EYCG* supports teachers in making consistent judgments about children's learning and development in relation to the learning statements. Teachers need to be able to make reliable and valid judgments based on evidence collected over time, about the particular phases in which a child is operating.

The following set of rubrics has been designed to support teachers in making judgments about children's learning and development in relation to the four phases. The rubrics describe the phases on a continuum of learning and are written to distinguish one phase from another in relation to each learning statement. Teachers can make consistent judgments by referring to the ways the phases are described in relation to each learning statement.

Social & personal learning

Social learning

Children sustain relationships by:

- **acknowledging and negotiating rights, roles and responsibilities in a range of contexts**

- **cooperating with others in social situations.**

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child identifies their own needs in the learning environment and interacts with others for short periods.	With support, the child identifies and takes on familiar roles and responsibilities and uses suggested or modelled strategies to interact with others constructively within school contexts.	With prompts, the child identifies shared roles and responsibilities and uses familiar strategies to sustain relationships in familiar contexts.	The child takes on and talks about roles and responsibilities in order to cooperate in a variety of learning contexts.

Children build early understandings about diversity by investigating and communicating positively about the social and cultural practices of people in their community.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child demonstrates personal understandings of social and cultural practices in their extended family.	With support, the child demonstrates personal understandings about social and cultural practices in their immediate community through interactions, play, representations or group discussions..	With prompts, the child identifies similarities and differences between their own practices and those of others described in texts or in the immediate community.	The child discusses similarities and differences and seeks to find out more about people's social and cultural practices across familiar contexts.

Personal learning

Children build a positive sense of self by:

- developing a sense of personal identity as a capable learner
- acting with increasing independence and responsibility towards learning and personal organisation.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child becomes aware of the expectations of the learning environment and is willing to join in a familiar experience.	With support, the child tries out some of the expected behaviours of the learning environment and acts with some self-confidence in individual and group learning contexts.	With prompts, the child meets shared expectations about independence and acts with increasing self-confidence in learning situations, taking increasing responsibility for materials and behaviour.	The child readily recalls shared expectations about participation in the learning environment, acts with independence and self-confidence and willingly takes responsibility for materials and behaviour.

Health & physical learning

Making healthy choices

Children build a sense of wellbeing by making choices about their own and others' health and safety with increasing independence.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child participates in discussions about how to be healthy and safe in the learning environment.	With support, the child participates in identified practices to be healthy and safe in the learning environment.	With prompts, the child chooses safe and healthy practices and demonstrates an awareness of how these choices may affect them.	The child makes choices from an identified range of practices to keep themself and others healthy and safe in familiar situations.

Gross-motor

Children build a sense of wellbeing by using and extending gross-motor skills when integrating movements and using equipment.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child joins in movement experiences that make use of familiar equipment, copying movements and gestures.	With support, the child explores different ways to move, and to use familiar equipment.	With prompts, the child tries out ways to use and combine movements, with or without equipment, for different purposes with developing confidence.	The child combines and coordinates familiar movements with developing control and strength, and increasing confidence, including when using equipment.

Fine-motor

Children build a sense of wellbeing by using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child experiments with equipment, materials, tools and objects in the learning environment.	With support, the child explores new ways to use equipment, materials, tools and objects for personal purposes.	With prompts, the child uses manipulative skills appropriate to the selected equipment, materials, tools and objects to achieve a task.	The child combines and coordinates movements with developing control, strength and increasing confidence when manipulating equipment, materials, tools and objects.

Language learning & communication

Oral language

Children expand their oral language by:

- **using spoken language (including home language, or signed or augmentative communication) for a range of purposes**
- **exploring the patterns and conventions of spoken, signed or augmentative language**
- **interacting with peers and familiar adults using, with support, the conventions associated with formal and informal group settings including attentive listening.**

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child uses simple language patterns and limited vocabulary and listens to discussions about using language conventions in social and learning situations.	With support, the child tries out new language patterns and vocabulary and shares some ideas about language conventions used in social and learning situations.	With prompts, the child chooses appropriate language patterns and vocabulary for identified purposes and contributes to discussions about the appropriate use of language conventions.	The child uses vocabulary needed for classroom learning experiences and adjusts the use of language patterns and conventions for familiar social and learning situations.

Early literacy

Children become readers and viewers by using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child participates in experiences involving texts and draws on personal understandings to interpret a small range of familiar texts.	With support, the child assigns personal meanings to symbol systems and interprets texts in personal ways in classroom contexts.	With prompts, the child uses emerging reading and viewing strategies and understandings to interpret symbol systems and texts for personal and classroom purposes.	The child uses shared understandings of symbol systems to interpret and make meaning from a range of familiar, simply structured text types.

Children become writers and shapers by experimenting with emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to communicate meanings.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child participates in writing and shaping experiences and draws on personal understandings to interpret their own or shared texts.	With support, the child experiments with writing and shaping using approximations of conventional symbol systems for personal purposes.	With prompts, the child uses emergent understandings of conventional symbol systems to write and shape texts for a small range of personal and classroom purposes.	The child writes and shapes texts mainly using conventional symbol systems, for a range of personal and classroom purposes.

Early mathematical understandings

Early numeracy

Children build early mathematical understandings about number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data and space by:

- **investigating and communicating ideas about quantities and their representations, and attributes of objects and collections**
- **investigating and communicating ideas about position, movement and direction**
- **investigating and communicating ideas about order, sequence and pattern.**

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child participates in discussions about early mathematical ideas and sometimes uses modelled practices.	With support, the child investigates early mathematical ideas by experimenting with objects, representations and modelled strategies to solve problems of personal interest.	With prompts, the child investigates own and shared mathematical problems using familiar objects and representations, sometimes suggesting strategies needed to proceed.	The child identifies and uses strategies to solve early mathematical problems and communicates about number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data, and space.

Active learning processes

Thinking

Children think and enquire by generating and discussing ideas and plans and solving problems.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child identifies problems and randomly experiments with ways to find personal solutions to problems.	With support, the child uses a small range of thinking strategies, and experiments with ways to solve problems in familiar situations.	With prompts, the child draws on their own experiences to identify relevant thinking strategies, and plans ways to solve problems in familiar situations.	The child uses and discusses a small range of thinking strategies and solves problems individually or collectively in a range of familiar situations.

Investigating the natural world

Children think and enquire by:

- **investigating their ideas about phenomena in the natural world**

- **developing shared understandings about these phenomena.**

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child observes familiar natural phenomena and comments on them.	With support, the child investigates familiar natural phenomena and discusses personal ideas about them.	With prompts, the child investigates and describes their own and others' ideas about the natural world and phenomena.	The child investigates and makes predictions about familiar natural phenomena, and discusses personal and shared understandings about group investigations.

Investigating technology

Children think and enquire by investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child talks about the technologies (ICTs, products, processes etc.) that they randomly explore in the learning environment.	With support, the child experiments with different technologies and talks about some of the purposes they serve at home or in the learning environment.	With prompts, the child uses familiar technologies and talks about how these technologies help them to learn, play or live at home or in their communities.	The child uses some available technologies for personal or learning needs, and talks about how these technologies might work, or help people in their communities.

Investigating environments

Children think and enquire by investigating features of, and ways to sustain, environments.

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
With explicit support, the child makes personal comments about features of their school or home environment.	With support, the child investigates the features of a range of familiar environments and shares personal ideas about them.	With prompts, the child investigates and compares features of familiar environments and collaborates on ways to care for them.	The child investigates familiar environments and initiates simple plans to help sustain them.

Imagining and responding

Children generate, represent and respond to ideas, experiences and possibilities by:

- **experimenting with materials and processes in a variety of creative, imaginative and innovative ways**
- **discussing and responding to the qualities of their own and others' representations, experiences and artistic works.**

Becoming aware	Exploring	Making connections	Applying
The child randomly experiments with materials and, with explicit support, tries out observed techniques and responds in personal ways to representations and artistic works.	With support, the child experiments with ways to generate and represent ideas and experiences that are personally meaningful, and participates in discussions about representations and artistic works.	With prompts, the child experiments with ways to imaginatively generate and represent ideas and experiences for personal purposes, and talks about features of representations and artistic works.	The child experiments with ways to generate and represent ideas and experiences for personal and shared purposes, and discusses their responses to features of representations and artistic works.

Included in the early years curriculum materials are two items that support teachers' use of the rubrics. These help teachers to make appropriate judgments about the phase that best describes a child's learning at any given time.

- *Learning statement rubrics* — a poster of the learning statements and their associated rubrics for each of the four phases of learning. This item is presented in an accessible, easy-to-read format and is a copy of the rubrics statements as detailed on pages 89–94.

- *Phase descriptors: Examples of children's behaviours in the 4 phases of learning.* This booklet provides examples of children's behaviour on a continuum of learning in relation to each learning statement, with links to Level 1 of the KLAs. The examples are valuable in giving teachers ideas about what to look for when making judgments about children's learning progress.

Appendix 1: Theorists informing the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*

Theorists	Key ideas considered for this curriculum	Influences on views of children	Influences on views of teachers and teaching strategies
Jean Piaget (1896–1980)	• Children construct knowledge. • Children assimilate experiences from the external world and then accommodate them within their current understandings. • Where understandings and experiences differ, children adjust their ideas to make a better fit of new with old understandings. • Development leads learning.	• Children learn through active exploration of concrete materials. • Piaget's theories led to a view of the "universal child" who passes through uniform stages of development. • Children are biologically pre-programmed to pass through the same phases of development regardless of social, cultural or other environmental factors.	• Teachers provide an environment rich in varied concrete materials. • Teachers select learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate for children.
Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)	• Children construct their knowledge through active participation in social and cultural experiences. • Play is of critical importance in children's cognitive development. • Meaning-making is strengthened by dialogue between children and more experienced others. • The language used in learning experiences becomes the child's internal thinking processes. • The optimum condition for learning occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD*). • Learning leads development. ** The ZPD describes the zone between what children can do independently and the new learning that they cannot yet accomplish individually but can carry out with assistance.*	• Children make meaning as they actively participate in social and cultural environments. • New learning takes place in the zone of proximal development. • Children's conceptual development is "stretched" during play.	• Teachers construct their knowledge through social and cultural experiences and these experiences influence their views of children and what is valued in the curriculum. • Teachers plan for new learning to be scaffolded by adults or children who can already use the new learning independently. • Teachers recognise the importance of children learning not only from adults, but also from peers when they mentor each other, as partners in the learning community. • Teachers provide many opportunities for children to engage in play that increases their understandings about people and objects. • Teachers provide opportunities to learn independently and with others. • The language teachers use in interactions with children becomes language children will use to guide thinking.
Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005)	• Challenged the idea that development and learning are genetically predetermined. • Children live and learn within multiple social and cultural contexts. • Learning is a reciprocal process. • Interactions with people, objects and symbols affect children's understandings, capabilities and dispositions. • Development and learning are greatly influenced by children's backgrounds, lifestyles, cultures and prior knowledges.	• Children live their lives in more environments than home and school. • Children learn best through reciprocal interactions with people with whom they have formed positive relationships. • It is important for children to represent their understandings in a variety of concrete forms.	• For learning and development to occur, children must engage in experiences fairly regularly over an extended period of time. • Teachers foster positive relationships among all those in the learning environment. • Long blocks of time must be provided to enable activities to become more complex. • Teachers provide opportunities for children to interact with people, objects and symbols that invite attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration, and imagination.

Theorists	Key ideas considered for this curriculum	Influences on views of children	Influences on views of teachers and teaching strategies
Brain researchers (late 1980s —)	• Early childhood is a critical period for brain development. • Children take in information through all senses — hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting. • Sensory input in early childhood triggers chemicals in the brain that build connections between neurons and create complex cognitive structures. • Chemicals generated through positive emotions strengthen memory.	• Children build up complex understandings through sensory learning experiences. • Children are naturally prepared to learn from their environment. • Positive emotions about learning experiences promote deep learning. • Programs should attend to children's intellectual, social, emotional and aesthetic development. • Children develop cognitive structures through play-based problem solving.	• Teachers provide opportunities to learn through all sensory channels. • Teachers plan collaboratively with children to develop learning experiences that engage children emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically. • Programs should attend to children's intellectual, social, emotional and aesthetic development. • Programs should be flexible enough to accommodate children's emerging interests.
Reconceptualists (early 1970s –)	• Theorists who reconceptualised the ways we think about children in order to recognise agency*, voice**, complex identities and social justice. *"Agency" is children having power to make choices and decisions.* *** "Voice" is children having their ideas and opinions heard and their diverse experiences valued and responded to.* • Challenged the view of a "universal childhood" by stating that childhoods may differ depending on the social and cultural circumstances in which they take place.	• Children are seen as capable learners. • Children have a role in decision-making processes. • Children have diverse understandings, capabilities and dispositions that may or may not be valued by different social and cultural groups. • Children need to be supported socially, culturally, emotionally as they engage in learning environments.	• Teachers recognise that diversity includes the different knowledges that children bring to school. • Teachers collaboratively plan learning experiences with children. • Teachers help children build connections between prior and new learning experiences. • Teachers involve children in monitoring their learning and provide them with feedback on their learning.

Appendix 2: **Samples of early learning record templates**

Two templates of early learning records (ELR) are provided here. Several templates are also available in electronic format in the *Teacher's CD–ROM: Early years curriculum materials*. We encourage you to photocopy a template that suits your purpose. Alternatively, adapt or personalise an electronic format to suit your specific needs.

Early learning record

Name: **Teacher:**   **Date:**

Learning statement	Phase of learning BA = Becoming Aware E = Exploring MC = Making Connections A = Applying	Link to key learning areas
Social learning Sustaining relationships	BA E MC A	**HPE — Enhancing personal development**
Social learning Understanding diversity	BA E MC A	**SOSE — Time, continuity & change; Culture & identity**
Personal learning Identity & independence	BA E MC A	**HPE — Enhancing personal development**
Making healthy choices	BA E MC A	**HPE — Promoting the health of individuals & communities**
Gross-motor	BA E MC A	**HPE — Developing skills & concepts for physical activity**
Fine-motor	BA E MC A	**HPE — Developing skills & concepts for physical activity**
Oral language	BA E MC A	**English — Speaking & listening**
Read and view	BA E MC A	**English — Reading & viewing**
Write and shape	BA E MC A	**English — Writing & shaping**
Early numeracy	BA E MC A	**Mathematics — all strands**
Thinking	BA E MC A	**Thinking is embedded in all KLA areas**
Investigating phenomena	BA E MC A	**Science — all strands**
Investigating technology	BA E MC A	**Technology — all strands**
Investigating environments	BA E MC A	**SOSE — Time, Continuity & Change; Place & space; Systems, Resources & Power**
Imagining and responding	BA E MC A	**The Arts — all strands**

Comments:

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Early learning record

Name: **Teacher:**   **Date:**

Learning statement	Phase of learning BA = Becoming Aware E = Exploring MC = Making Connections A = Applying	Comments
Social & personal learning		
Social learning *Children sustain relationships by:* • acknowledging and negotiating rights, roles and responsibilities in a range of contexts • cooperating with others in social situations.	BA E MC A	
Children build early understandings about diversity by: • investigating and communicating positively about the social and cultural practices of people in their community.	BA E MC A	
Personal learning *Children build a positive sense of self by:* • developing a sense of personal identity as a capable learner • acting with increasing independence and responsibility towards learning and personal organisation.	BA E MC A	
Health & physical learning		
Making healthy choices *Children build a sense of wellbeing by:* • making choices about their own and others' health and safety with increasing independence.	BA E MC A	
Gross-motor *Children build a sense of wellbeing by:* • using and extending gross-motor skills when integrating movements and using equipment.	BA E MC A	
Fine-motor *Children build a sense of wellbeing by:* • using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects.	BA E MC A	
Language learning & communication		
Oral language *Children expand their oral language by:* • using spoken language (including home language, or signed or augmentative communication) for a range of purposes • exploring the patterns and conventions of spoken, signed or augmentative language • interacting with peers and familiar adults using, with support, the conventions associated with formal and informal group settings including attentive listening.	BA E MC A	

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Early learning record *(cont.)*

Learning statement	Phase of learning BA = Becoming Aware E = Exploring MC = Making Connections A = Applying	Comments
Language learning & communication *(cont.)*		
Early literacy *Children become readers and viewers by:* • using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.	BA E MC A	
Children become writers and shapers by: • experimenting with emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to communicate meanings.	BA E MC A	
Early mathematical understandings		
Early numeracy *Children build early mathematical understandings about number, patterns & algebra, measurement, chance & data and space by:* • investigating and communicating about quantities and their representations, and attributes of objects and collections • investigating and communicating about position, movement and direction • investigating and communicating about order, sequence and pattern.	BA E MC A	
Active learning processes		
Thinking *Children think and enquire by:* • generating and discussing ideas and plans and solving problems.	BA E MC A	
Investigating the natural world *Children think and enquire by:* • investigating their ideas about phenomena in the natural world • developing shared understandings about these phenomena.	BA E MC A	
Investigating technology *Children think and enquire by:* • investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life.	BA E MC A	
Investigating environments *Children think and enquire by:* • investigating features of, and ways to sustain, environments.	BA E MC A	
Imagining and responding *Children generate, represent and respond to ideas, experiences and possibilities by:* • experimenting with materials and processes in a variety of creative, imaginative and innovative ways • discussing and responding to the qualities of their own and others' representations, experiences and artistic works.	BA E MC A	

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Glossary

Action research: Recurring cycles of planning, acting, observing or monitoring and critical reflection that support teachers to actively research their own practice to affirm use of approaches and/or facilitate change.

Aesthetic qualities: Qualities of objects, representations and environments that evoke sensory (visual, auditory and bodily–kinaesthetic) or emotional responses.

Agency: Individuals exercise agency when they feel empowered to make choices and decisions.

Alternative communication: See *Augmentative communication*

Augmentative communication: Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) refers to methods of communication that replace (alternative) or enhance (augmentative) conventional forms of speech and writing. AAC includes both electronic and non-electronic communication devices that help people to represent language concepts. Manual communication boards often display pictures, photographs, graphics, abstract symbols, or printed words. Electronic devices synthesise common spoken phrases or produce written text.

Child-responsive learning: Learning experiences based on understandings of the child and designed to take into account the child's interests, backgrounds, needs and capabilities.

Co-construction: Teachers and children construct their knowledges through reciprocal interactions with people, objects and representations within social and cultural contexts. Learning occurs as children interact with adults and/or with peers, as they work as partners in a learning community.

Culture: Culture is learned in families and communities, belongs to groups of people, and is a shared way of doing, believing and knowing. (Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.)

Dispositions: Enduring habits of mind and action, and tendencies to respond to situations in characteristic ways. Dispositions are currently understood to develop primarily through interactions with others. (A willingness to explore, communicate, act independently and collaboratively, persevere, and maintain an open mind are examples of dispositions that are important for lifelong learning.)

Ethnic identity: See *Gender identity*

Evidence of learning: An artefact that demonstrates a child's understandings, capabilities or dispositions, related to a particular learning statement, in the form of a record of observation or conversation or a product of learning. This information about children's learning or evidence is gathered in partnership with children, parents and other partners such as specialist colleagues.

Focused analysis: A technique used for analysing and interpreting information gathered to determine children's learning in relation to the learning statements and phases of learning. Annotations of the analysis highlight children's understandings, capabilities and dispositions at a particular point in time and indicate the focus of further learning experiences.

Focused learning: Explicit teaching, either child- or teacher-initiated, where children and teachers are actively engaged in interactions and share control over the direction and focus of learning.

Gender identity and ethnic identity: Gender is a social construction, which can vary across cultures, class, location and time. Gender identity and ethnic identity are dynamic — constantly in the process of forming; each identity informs and forms the other. How children learn to be a girl or boy, and what they learn about being a girl or boy is informed by their ethnicity and vice versa. (Adapted from Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.)

Inclusivity: Taking account of all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in the decision-making processes of organising curriculum and structuring learning experiences and assessment opportunities. This ensures that: all children have equitable access to resources and participation in the classroom; there is recognition and valuing of the experiences of all children; opportunities are provided for all children to value difference; and there is provision of multiple opportunities for all children to demonstrate their learning.

Inquiry-based learning: An approach to learning that involves children actively in independent or collaborative inquiry that fosters deep engagement, intellectual rigour and participation in substantive conversations (see *Substantive conversation*). Inquiry-based learning involves children questioning, theorising, hypothesising, discussing, recalling, interpreting, and with support, analysing and deciding on future action. The teacher interacts to motivate, prompt, question, initiate conversations and summarise ideas generated through discussions. Inquiry-based learning often provides a springboard into longer-term investigations, called negotiated projects (see *Negotiated projects*).

Integrated learning: The design of learning experiences that authentically combine more than one learning focus while still making each aspect of learning explicit to children.

Investigations: A way of learning through focused, active exploration of ideas, materials and processes involving observation, questioning, hypothesising, testing ideas and evaluating outcomes of the exploration.

Multiliteracies: A broad view of literacy that takes into account the influence of and constant change in communication technologies. It acknowledges many forms of representation and how meanings are increasingly communicated using multimodal and electronic texts. This view of literacy also recognises the diverse nature of social and cultural practices associated with literacy and how these practices provide differential access to power within society.

Multimodal texts: Texts composed using two or more modes, written, visual, spoken and sound. Examples young children are familiar with are print-based (picture story books, food and toy packaging, catalogues) and screen-based (electronic games, the internet, television).

Negotiated projects: An approach that involves children working collaboratively with the teacher and/or peers to investigate a topic of deep (personal) interest. Together they choose, plan, design, inquire about, communicate and record their learning throughout the project. Projects are one way to negotiate curriculum with children and engage them in actively co-constructing their understandings while building a positive sense of themselves as learners.

Observation: An assessment technique used for gathering information about children's learning. The technique involves watching and listening to, and interacting with, children deliberately and purposefully to gather information about and interpret children's learning across a range of contexts. Observations can be recorded and gathered in many ways, including anecdotal records, running records, using checklists or focus sheets (e.g. rubrics), and taking photographs and audio/video recordings of children's learning.

Partnerships: Partnerships include the formal and informal relationships and processes that people or groups participate in to support children's learning and development in the early years. Effective partnerships are characterised by people having common goals and expectations, communicating openly and treating each other with respect.

Play: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations. Play often involves pleasure and imagination. It is usually initiated by the child or negotiated between children rather than being imposed by an adult.

Pre-compulsory education: In Queensland, all education programs offered before Year 1 in any setting. Attendance at such programs is not compulsory under Queensland legislation.

Real-life situations: In an educational context, everyday experiences that are typical of activities children may engage in as part of their families and communities, and that also provide opportunities for learning. Examples include cooking, gardening, reading or participating in community events.

Reciprocal interactions: Interactions between people, or between people and objects or symbols, that involve mutual action or influence. Reciprocal interactions between people are responsive, i.e. each party influences the others.

Routines: In an educational context, regular events during the day that have a familiar organisational and temporal pattern, and that are used as a context for learning; e.g. mealtime, quiet activities or story reading.

Rubric: A set of general criteria organised on a fixed scale, used to assess a learner's progress in relation to a learning statement. A rubric offers a continuum that helps teachers to assess children's learning consistently.

Scaffolding: The scaffolding analogy comes from the building industry, and refers to the process of supporting a child's learning to solve a problem or perform a task that could not be accomplished by that child alone. The aim is to support the child as much as necessary while they build their understanding and ability to use the new learning; then gradually reduce the support until the child can use the new learning independently.

Sociocultural perspective: The sociocultural perspective of teaching, learning and assessment takes into account the connections between children's learning and development and the social and cultural worlds in which they live.

Substantive conversation: Sustained conversation between children and between teachers and children that builds understanding of concepts and ideas.

Symbol systems: Shared symbols are a way of communicating that is shared and understood by a group of people — personal symbols have meaning for an individual, but not necessarily for others.

Teachable moments: Teachable moments are opportunities for explicit learning and teaching that emerge spontaneously as children interact with people, objects and representations. These moments involve teachers responding directly and purposefully to children's ideas, questions and interests as they co-construct new learning.

Technologies: "Technologies" does not simply refer to computers or information and communication technologies. Technologies are the diverse range of products that make up the designed world. These products extend beyond artefacts designed and developed by people and include processes, systems, services and environments.

Transitions: Experiences designed to promote learning that also help to organise children as they move from one learning situation to another.

Voice: Individuals have voice when their ideas and perspectives are heard, valued and responded to in conjunction with others' ideas and perspectives and in a framework of mutual respect.

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