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HARVARD
MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

CHCECE038

Observe children to inform practice

LEARNER GUIDE

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Version Control & Document History

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This Learner Guide

CHCECE038 - Observe children to inform practice (Release 1)

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to identify and gather information about children from observation and other sources as part of a collaborative process and as a basis for curriculum planning.

This unit applies to educators who contribute to the curriculum planning process under the guidance of others in regulated children's education and care services in Australia.

The skills in this unit must be applied in accordance with Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation, Australian standards and industry codes of practice.

No occupational licensing, certification or specific legislative requirements apply to this unit at the time of publication.

A complete copy of the above unit of competency can be downloaded from the TGA website:

https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCECE038

About this Unit of Study Introduction

As a worker, a trainee, or a future worker, you want to enjoy your work and become known as a valuable team member. This unit of competency will help you acquire the knowledge and skills to work effectively as an individual and in groups. It will give you the basis to contribute to the goals of the organisation which employs you.

It is essential that you begin your training by becoming familiar with the industry standards to which organisations must conform.

This Learner Guide Covers

Observe Children to Inform Practice

  I.   Observe and Interact with Children

  II. Seek Information from Secondary Sources

  III. Record and Communicate Information

  IV. Analyse and Interpret Information and Observations

  V.   Contribute to Curriculum Planning

Learning Program

As you progress through this unit of study, you will develop skills in locating and understanding an organisation's policies and procedures. You will build up a sound knowledge of the industry standards within which organisations must operate. You will become more aware of the effect that your own skills in dealing with people have on your success or otherwise in the workplace. Knowledge of your skills and capabilities will help you make informed choices about your further study and career options.

Additional Learning Support

To obtain additional support, you may:

- Search for other resources. You may find books, journals, videos and other materials which provide additional information about topics in this unit.

- Search for other resources in your local library. Most libraries keep information about government departments and other organisations, services and programs. The librarian should be able to help you locate such resources.

- Contact information services such as Infolink, Equal Opportunity Commission, Commissioner of Workplace Agreements, Union organisations, and public relations and information services provided by various government departments. Many of these services are listed in the telephone directory.

- Contact your facilitator.

Facilitation

Your training organisation will provide you with a facilitator. Your facilitator will play an active role in supporting your learning. Your facilitator will help you at any time during working hours to assist with:

- How and when to make contact,

- what you need to do to complete this unit of study, and

- what support will be provided.

Here are some of the things your facilitator may do to make your study easier:

- Give you a clear visual timetable of events for the semester or term in which you are enrolled, including any deadlines for assessments.

- Provide you with online webinar times and availability.

- Use 'action sheets' to remind you about tasks you need to complete, and updates on websites.

- Make themselves available by telephone for support discussion and provide you with industry updates by email where applicable.

- Keep in touch with you during your studies.

Flexible Learning

Studying to become a competent worker is an interesting and exciting thing to do. You will learn about current issues in this area. You will establish relationships with other students, fellow workers, and clients. You will learn about your own ideas, attitudes, and values. You will also have fun. (Most of the time!)

At other times, studying can seem overwhelming and impossibly demanding, particularly when you have an assignment to do and you aren't sure how to tackle it, your family and friends want you to spend time with them, or a movie you want to see is on television.

Sometimes being a student can be hard.

Here are some ideas to help you through the hard times. To study effectively, you need space, resources, and time.

Space

Try to set up a place at home or at work where:

1. You can keep your study materials,

2. you can be reasonably quiet and free from interruptions, and

3. you can be reasonably comfortable, with good lighting, seating, and a flat surface for writing.

If it is impossible for you to set up a study space, perhaps you could use your local library. You will not be able to store your study materials there, but you will have quiet, a desk and chair, and easy access to the other facilities.

Study Resources

The most basic resources you will need are:

1. A chair

2. A desk or table

3. A computer with Internet access

4. A reading lamp or good light

5. A folder or file to keep your notes and study materials together

6. Materials to record information (pen and paper or notebooks, or a computer and printer)

7. Reference materials, including a dictionary

Do not forget that other people can be valuable study resources. Your fellow workers, work supervisor, other students, your facilitator, your local librarian, and workers in this area can also help you.

Time

It is important to plan your study time. Work out a time that suits you and plan around it. Most people find that studying, in short, concentrated blocks of time (an hour or two) at regular intervals (daily, every second day, once a week) is more effective than trying to cram a lot of learning into a whole day. You need time to 'digest' the information in one section before you move on to the next, and everyone needs regular breaks from study to avoid overload. Be realistic in allocating time for study. Look at what is required for the unit and look at your other commitments.

Make up a study timetable and stick to it. Build in 'deadlines' and set yourself goals for completing study tasks. Allow time for reading and completing activities. Remember that it is the quality of the time you spend studying rather than the quantity that is important.

Study Strategies

Different people have different learning 'styles'. Some people learn best by listening or repeating things out loud. Some learn best by 'doing', some by reading and making notes. Assess your own learning style and try to identify any barriers to learning which might affect you. Are you easily distracted? Are you afraid you will fail? Are you taking study too seriously? Not seriously enough? Do you have supportive friends and family? Here are some ideas for effective study strategies:

1. **Make notes.** This often helps you to remember new or unfamiliar information. Do not worry about spelling or neatness, as long as you can read your own notes. Keep your notes with the rest of your study materials and add to them as you go. Use pictures and diagrams if this helps.

2. **Underline keywords** when you are reading the materials in this Learner Guide. (Do not underline things in other people's books.) This also helps you to remember important points.

3. **Talk to other people** (fellow workers, fellow students, friends, family, or your facilitator) about what you are learning. As well as help you to clarify and understand new ideas, talking also gives you a chance to find out extra information and to get fresh ideas and different points of view.

Using this Learner Guide

A Learner Guide is just that, a guide to help you learn. A Learner Guide is not a textbook. Your Learner Guide will:

1. Describe the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve competency for this unit.

2. Provide information and knowledge to help you develop your skills.

3. Provide you with structured learning activities to help you absorb knowledge and information and practice your skills.

4. Direct you to other sources of additional knowledge and information about topics for this unit.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Learner Guide

Some sections are quite long and cover complex ideas and information. If you come across anything you do not understand:

1. Talk to your facilitator.

2. Research the area using the books and materials listed under Resources.

3. Discuss the issue with other people (your workplace supervisor, fellow workers, fellow students).

4. Try to relate the information presented in this Learner Guide to your own experience and to what you already know.

5. Ask yourself questions as you go. For example, 'Have I seen this happening anywhere?' 'Could this apply to me?' 'What if...' This will help you to 'make sense' of new material, and to build on your existing knowledge.

6. Talk to people about your study. Talking is a great way to reinforce what you are learning.

7. Make notes.

8. Work through the activities. Even if you are tempted to skip some activities, do them anyway. They are there for a reason, and even if you already have the knowledge or skills relating to a particular activity, doing them will help to reinforce what you already know. If you do not understand an activity, think carefully about the way the questions or instructions are phrased. Read the section again to see if you can make sense of it. If you are still confused, contact your facilitator or discuss the activity with other students, fellow workers or with your workplace supervisor.

Additional Research, Reading, and Note-Taking

If you are using the additional references and resources suggested in the Learner Guide to take your knowledge a step further, there are a few simple things to keep in mind to make this kind of research easier.

Always make a note of the author's name, the title of the book or article, the edition, when it was published, where it was published, and the name of the publisher. This includes online articles. If you are taking notes about specific ideas or information, you will need to put the page number as well. This is called the reference information. You will need this for some assessment tasks, and it will help you to find the book again if you need to.

Keep your notes short and to the point. Relate your notes to the material in your Learner Guide. Put things into your own words. This will give you a better understanding of the material.

Start off with a question you want answered when you are exploring additional resource materials. This will structure your reading and save you time.

Introduction

Professional practice in early childhood education is a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. Educational programs and practices are constantly changing. As a professional, it is your responsibility to assess existing practices and reflect on how you can further improve them.

Observing children in their usual play patterns, routines, and daily interactions can help you to understand their strengths, interests, and needs for their development. Collaborating with and collecting information from secondary sources, including families, colleagues, and specialists is also a great way to help you find out vital information about children.

In this learner guide, you will learn how you to:

- observe and interact with children

- seek information from secondary sources

- record and communicate information

- analyse and interpret information and observations

- contribute to curriculum planning.

I. Observe and Interact with Children

As an educator, you have the opportunity to observe and interact with children in various learning environments. It is essential for you to know about observation techniques, tools, and processes to execute your practice properly. These observations and interactions provide you with vital information on interests, ideas, knowledge, skills, and strengths, which will allow you to understand the learning styles and preferences that best result in the expected outcomes of different curriculums.

This chapter will discuss how you can:

- identify children's interests, ideas, knowledge, skills and strengths based on observation and interaction

- investigate and understand a range of observation techniques and their application in the workplace

- seek guidance from colleagues about observation tools and processes

- select appropriate observation technique according to the context of the observation.

1.1 Identify Children's Interests, Ideas, Knowledge, Skills and Strengths Based on Observation and Interactions

Every child is unique. Their interests, ideas, knowledge, skills, and strengths differ from one another. It is crucial that you adapt to the differences in every child's personality and preference to ensure that you are inclusive in your practice and cater to individual development needs.

Observation is the act of noticing or looking for specific information. Interaction refers to the actions or influence that occur between two or more children. Observation and interaction go hand in hand. You may observe a child while they interact with you or with other people. You may also observe them while they are on their own or when they interact with their environment.

1.1.1 Identifying Children's Interest

Identifying a child's interest is a crucial part of being an educator. Knowing what children want to do and what they find interesting can help you understand how to carry out your lesson plan and achieve positive learning outcomes.

Based on Observation

Interests refer to those that the children want to do, to have, or feel excited about. Identifying children's interests based on observation will require you to take into consideration their development stage. The children under your care may belong to different age groups and would have varying interests.

Below are some signs of interest that you may observe in a child:

Age	Signs of Interest
0–6 months	- Examines an object intently - Reaches out to an object (e.g. food, toys, blanket) - Laughs and smiles at the sight of an object. (i.e. after seeing the picture book they want, they start laughing and clapping)
6–12 months	- Picks up small objects they want - Imitates words they hear - Responds very actively (i.e. bouncing up and down while sitting when they see something they like)
12–24 months	- Follows taught command that they like (e.g. clapping, opening and closing hands) - Repeats words (i.e. things that they want such as banana if they are hungry) - Chooses objects they like
2–3 years	- Speaks out what they want - Repeatedly chooses the same toys or objects - Responds to topics they like (i.e. joins in on the conversation)
3–5 years	- Initiates interaction with the object or person (e.g. goes to the shelf to pick up their favourite book) - Demands what they want (i.e. voices out what they want to eat or read) - Participates actively

These signs of interest translate into what children want to do and enjoy doing. By closely monitoring and observing what children's interests are, you can build your practice around them so that you can incite positive responses and active participation. Children are more likely to learn if you are teaching them through ways that match their interests.

Based on Interaction

When children interact either with you or with others, similar signs as the ones in the table on the prior page would be noticeable in their behaviour if they are interested in something. However, when you interact with children, you are no longer passively observing them. You can initiate actions that will allow you to identify their interests. To identify children's interests based on interaction, you may do the following:

- Provide children with various learning opportunities so that they can explore their interests.

- Be supportive and respectful towards choices. When children feel free to choose what they want, they feel encouraged to express their interests.

- Use different learning environments to see how they respond in different settings.

- Take note of signs of interest in every significant interaction.

1.1.2 Identifying Children's Ideas

An idea is a thought on how a certain thing may be done. Even at a young age, children can come up with their own ideas. Although given that they are young, their youthful ideas are to be expected. Listening to children's ideas is a great way to build trust and rapport.

Based on Observation

To identify children's ideas across different age groups based on observation, you may do the following:

- **Be patient**

   Children do not always have the capacity to voice out their ideas. Being frustrated and disregarding their thoughts may be detrimental to children's development.

- **Use context clues**

   Having a limited vocabulary is a challenge for children. When trying to understand what a child is trying to express, you can use context clues to help you figure out what they are trying to say.

- **Be attentive**

   Children have different ways of expressing themselves. They may not always voice out what they are thinking. For example, if a child is always reluctant to do an activity and tries to do something else, this may be a sign that they have a different idea of how they want to do things.

Based on Interaction

To identify children's ideas across different age groups based on interaction, you may do the following:

- **Be an active listener**

   When you are talking with a child, it is vital to show that you are listening to them. Maintain appropriate eye contact and paraphrase what they are trying to say.

- **Encourage expression of ideas**

   You may encourage children to share their ideas through incentives and positive reassurance. This will let children know that their ideas are welcome and that they are free to express what they are thinking.

1.1.3 Identifying Children's Knowledge

Knowledge is the collective information acquired through experience and learning. It is important to identify children's knowledge or what a child currently knows so that you can understand their learning and development needs.

Based on Observation

To identify children's knowledge across different age groups based on observation, you may do the following:

- **Monitor responses to different learning environments**

  Responses may be verbal (using words) or non-verbal (through actions). For example, observe how each child is using an object or how familiar they are with a topic.

- **Examine behavioural patterns**

  A child's way of doing things reflect what they know and what they need to learn.

Based on Interaction

To identify children's knowledge across different age groups based on interaction, you may do the following:

- **Provide various opportunities for interactions in different learning environments**

  Children will be able to showcase what they know if they are given chances to express themselves in different ways.

- **Use open-ended materials**

  Open-ended materials are those that may be used in different ways (e.g. approved materials such as smooth rocks, leaves, and building blocks). This encourages creativity and can help you understand the learning capacity of each child.

1.1.4 Identifying Children's Skills

A skill is the ability of a child to perform an action. To identify a child's skill, you will have to take into consideration their development stage. There are different stages of development that influence a child's capacity to perform.

Infants (0–12 months)

At this age, children will not have a clear understanding of consciously intentional behaviour. An infant will not understand that pulling your hair is unacceptable behaviour; they are simply exploring. Infants are unable to understand conscious reactions during interactions with others and may grab things from others because they do not understand the concept of sharing. Infants will cry to express needs or get your attention and will often use actions to communicate likes or dislikes.

Babies (12–24 months)

During this stage, behaviour is influenced by increased mobility and language onset. Babies begin to explore cause and effect relationships, still do not consciously plan actions, are unable to understand, remember, or follow the rules, and do not yet understand sharing. Babies begin to show greater interest in other children, begin to develop independence, and test boundaries.

Toddlers (2–3 years)

Toddlers can imitate their peers, start to alternate roles in play, and begin to establish friendships. They may become easily frustrated when things do not turn out as expected and begin to test the limits of their behaviour. It is not also uncommon for toddlers to have a tantrum. Children of this age are beginning to learn right from wrong and to comprehend the relationship between actions and consequences. They will be able to follow simple rules and must learn to deal with the frustration of being told 'no'.

Preschool-aged children (4–5 years)

By this stage, children remember past experiences with others, which can become part of the self-concept. Children will compare themselves to others, develop an understanding of social rules and empathy, and will show a systematic increase in pro-social behaviour along with a natural decrease in aggressive behaviour. Pre-schoolers learn how to be a friend, may become more competitive, and may sometimes use words to hurt others. Children will also often ask questions, become more critical, manipulate ideas internally, are consciously aware of their own interests and intentions, talk through things in a simple manner, and make appropriate decisions before acting.

1.1.5 Identifying Children's Strengths

Strengths are those that you can do well. For children, these include their knowledge and skills.

You may identify children's strengths by comparing their knowledge and skills against set standards for their age groups. You must understand that different children have different strengths and may showcase these in varying ways. For example, although toddlers are expected to be able to follow simple rules, a child not doing this does mean that they are incapable of doing so. You will have to consider the circumstances that may have affected the child. You need to research the different milestones that are expected from children of different age groups. Example factors include the social and physical environments of the child's home and community.

A strengths-based approach in encouraging a child to learn new things is important because the approach sees to it that a child does not feel frustrated from learning new concepts beyond their level of understanding reading. It also sees to it that a child will have a solid foundation in developing a skill that caters to their strength. This makes the development of that skill easier and encourages the child to do better in said skill rather than risking the child becoming discouraged from developing a skill that they are not ready for.

Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Sparkling Stars is the simulated early years learning centre environment referenced in our learning resources.

A chart of developmental milestones for children aged 0–12 years is available on their site. You can access them through the link below.

Developmental milestones

(username: newusername   password: new password)

1.2 Investigate and Understand a Range of Observation Techniques and Their Application in the Workplace

Observation, as defined in the previous subchapter, is the act of noticing or looking for specific information. As an educator, observation is an essential tool that you need to learn to fully understand how you can support children's development and reflect on your practice. Observation techniques refer to the way of carrying out the process of observing. There is a range of observation techniques available that you can utilise. To figure out the best and most appropriate techniques for you to use, you will need to investigate which techniques can be best applied to your practice. Investigation requires researching and examining different techniques to understand how they can be performed. If you did not gather meaningful information from your observations, you could misunderstand or misinterpret a child's needs and interests or miss developmental milestones. Observation can have many purposes, including:

- gathering information on a child's emerging skills

- assessing and monitoring a child's play preferences, social interactions, communication and language, thinking styles, learning styles, physical abilities, and emotional status

- collecting the perspectives, views, and ideas of children

- gathering information about each child's development

- analysing behaviour to identify triggers or consequences which are affecting behaviour and reactions.

- investigating a child's behaviour and expressed emotions to identify an additional need

- identifying and documenting needs for additional care or support

- identifying the cultural and language background and migration experiences of the child

- gathering information about the contexts of children 's and their families lives.

When investigating the observation techniques that may be applied to your practice, make sure that your information is safe and from credible sources. It is important that your information is recent and factual. The table below provides you with some of the questions you must check to verify that your research sources are credible.

Things to Check
Is this material published within the last ten years?
Is this article written by respectable authors?
Is this website registered by a government or educational institution?
Is this from an academic database?
Is there a proper reference or citation used for this?
Is this child-friendly information?

Different sources have different observation techniques. This subchapter will discuss the three most common types of observation techniques, including:

Formal Observation	Informal Observation	Controlled Observation

Formal Observation

Formal observation is also known as structured observation. Formal observation requires a systematic way of performing the observation. This is usually used when the observation has a specific focus or when you want to find out the answer to a specific question. For example, if you want to find out which learning material is more engaging to children, whether it is water or sand, you may use formal observation.

To conduct the formal observation, you can set up the necessary steps below to identify the answer to your specific question.

1. **List objectives**

   Objectives need to be clear and specific in order to validate whether these objectives have been achieved (e.g. child must be able to use appropriate toys when playing in the sandpit). Avoid general objectives, such as 'child must be able to learn' as they may result in vague or inconsistent observations.

2. **Identify what is needed for the observation**

   You must provide the materials necessary for the observation. (e.g. toys, drawing materials)

3. **Organise environment**

   You should also prepare the specific location where the observation will happen. For instance, if observation involves certain elements of children's space, make sure to place them where they are needed.

4. **Choose and prepare observation tools and processes**

   You should pick the suitable tools and processes for observation to be able to record remarks effectively. If needed, you may use multiple tools and processes, especially if they complement each other. The tools and processes will be discussed in the next subchapter.

Informal Observation

Informal observation is also known as naturalistic observation. This technique is the opposite of formal observation. There is no controlled environment needed for this one. You will be conducting the observation in a natural setting or without altering the normal environment where the children will be at. This is usually used when you want to understand or know more about something you are uncertain of.

For example, the purpose of your observation is to know how children interact with each other during nature play. You are not sure what the specific answers will be. To conduct the informal observation, you can join a class during their nature play activity and observe how children interact with each other. You do not have to control their environment or routine; simply let them behave as they usually would on their own.

Controlled Observation

The controlled observation technique is closely related to that of formal observation. The main difference with controlled observation is that the whole observation is controlled, which may include one-on-one interviews. The environment and setting in which the observation will take place are prepared prior. This technique is usually used when there is a very specific response that you want to deliberately illicit from the subjects. For example, you can use a survey (controlled by the observer) to know about specific preferences without any influence from external factors since the choices for response are controlled by the observer.

For all the observation techniques discussed above, it is important to always take note of your observations to ensure that you have all the necessary information. Be sure to prepare beforehand and use the appropriate observation technique for the purpose of your observation.

Below are some tips you need to remember when observing children:

- **Withhold any bias opinion**

  The things you assume about a person can greatly influence what you expect of them. This can be extremely detrimental to a child's development. If you act as if you only expect negative things from a child, you may end up having incorrect observations that do not support growth and development.

  As an example, say Tom, a child in your centre, throws tantrums all the time and is known to not have any friends because he likes to kick and spit. Some say he is a bad seed because he lives in a bad neighbourhood. This kind of biased opinion has a negative effect on Tom. Because people already expect Tom to be a bad seed, they focus on his negative behaviour rather than trying to understand what may actually be causing his outbursts.

- **Consider different factors that affect a child's behaviour, including:**

  - *Cultural background*

    A child's culture can affect the way they respond to certain things.

  - *Parental behaviour*

    Parents may have a certain way of rearing their children, and this can affect how children respond to other people.

  - *Medical conditions*

    Information about a child's condition should be disclosed during enrolment. There are various conditions that can affect the way a child behaves, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism, and Asperger's syndrome.

- **Be factual**

  Your observations must be based on factual observations. Do not jump to conclusions based on isolated incidents. For example, if a child is withdrawn and shy, this does not automatically mean that they have a slow learning pace. Your observations need to note facts. Reviewing your observations to come up with conclusions would come after you have gathered and reviewed all necessary information.

1.3 Seek Guidance From Colleagues About Observation Tools and Processes

Your experiences while observing the children in your care can give you a lot of insight into how you can plan your curriculum. Your observations will influence your curriculum planning. The curriculum program is relative to the records you gather about each child, as well as from your professional experience in practice. You may use the information you have collected to provide and design experiences, routines, and interactions that reflect the interests and needs of each child.

Equally important are the experiences of other educators and colleagues. Seeking guidance from colleagues about observation tools and processes can be of tremendous help in understanding how you can utilise observation to inform your practice.

Your colleagues include any person who interacts and works with the children in the centre, collectively known as early childhood professionals. These professionals include, but are not limited to:

- Early childhood practitioners (or educators) and school teachers

- Centre supervisors and managers

- Health and developmental professionals (e.g. maternal and child health nurses, school nurses, early childhood intervention workers, play therapist)

- Family, student and inclusion support workers or officers

Observation tools refer to the equipment or devices that you may use during observations. Below are some samples of observation tools:

Observation Tool	Description
Checklists	If there are expected outcomes or behaviours, you can create a list you can anticipate what to look for. These are lists that identify knowledge, skills, or aptitudes. These are normally created to meet certain criteria, and they are used to observe whether a child can meet these criteria.
Recorder or audiotape	You may choose to record a narration of your observations by using a recorder or audiotape. This will allow you to replay everything you have noticed during the observation.
Learning stories	These are used to record and present observations of children over a period of time, therefore building a narrative-like story.
Pen and paper	You may prefer using the traditional method of pen and paper to record your observations. This tool may be used to jot down significant information.

Meanwhile, observation processes are the actions that are done to satisfy or complete the purpose of your observation. Below are some samples of observation processes:

Observation Process	Description
Time sampling	Involves completing an observation of a child in short narrative form, usually around 10–15-minutes.
Tracking	Involves following a child's choices within their environment, such as transition preferences and play choices.
Specific targeting	Focuses on one-on-one observations, which can be used to look at something in particular or to complete an open-ended observation.
Documenting	Documents children's learning to create a narrative, outlining what a child has done and achieved. Documents pertaining to the observations are usually kept as a portfolio or folder accessible to staff and parents.

To seek guidance from your colleagues, you may use the following:

Organisational Policies and Procedures

Your organisation would have policies and procedures that regulate how you may collaborate with your colleagues. This may include privacy and confidentiality policies for sharing private information. In discussing information with colleagues, you must follow all your organisational guidelines and only discuss children's information with appropriate people. Make sure to review your organisational policies and procedures so that you can ensure the security of the children under your care.

Initiate Conversations

You can gather invaluable information from your colleagues by setting up meetings and seminars. Initiating the conversation can give you control over the information you want to ask about observation tools and processes.

Collaborate on Observation Plans

Collaborating with your colleagues means that you share useful information that can help your practice. Since they themselves would be involved with children, their insights and experiences using different observation tools and processes can be used to create an observation plan that you may consult for different scenarios and purposes.

Here are some communication techniques that you can use to collaborate with colleagues:

- Compare notes on observation tools and processes.
    - Which tools do children respond to the best?
    - Which processes yield the best result for their purpose?
- Inquire about your colleague's historical use of observation tools and processes.
    - Based on their experience, which observation tool did they use for certain scenarios?
    - Which processes did they apply for certain purposes?
- Identify the differences in your practice that may influence the tools and processes you use individually.
    - For which development stage did they use certain observation tools and processes?
    - Are the services you provide similar to other colleagues?

1.4 Select Appropriate Observation Technique According to the Context of the Observation

Subchapter 1.2 discussed the observation techniques that you may utilise to inform your practice. Each technique may be applied to different scenarios depending on its purpose. To recall, these observation techniques include:

Formal Observation

- a systematic way of performing the observation

Informal Observation

- observation conducted in a natural setting

Controlled Observation

- the environment and setting in which the observation will take place is prepared prior

It is crucial that the information that you collect in your observations is appropriate, detailed, and varied so that you can make accurate assessments of a child's learning and development needs.

Through the process of observation, the varying aspects of a child's development and children's needs and interests can be identified and used to create a program that meets their interests, strengths, needs, and preferences.

To select the appropriate observation technique, you need to consider the context of your observation. Consider the following:

- What are you looking for?

- What behaviour, skill, or area of development are you trying to measure?

- What is the purpose of the observation?

- What are your expected outcomes from the observation?

- Who are the people involved in the observation?

Answering these questions will help you understand which observation technique is the best fit for the information you are trying to gather. It is important to remember that different techniques may be used interchangeably or in varying situations depending on how significant the effects will be on your observation.

For example, if you believe that placing children in a constructed environment to see how well they interact with each other will significantly alter their normal behaviour, then you may opt to use an informal observation technique. However, this does not mean that informal observation techniques are exclusively used to gather this kind of information. Formal techniques may also be used for similar situations if you think that the processes involved will not have any significant influence.

Below are samples of how you can observe children in different contexts:

Observing Physical Development

Physical development refers development of balance and movement of a child (e.g. the limbs and fine movement of fingers). Physical development can be observed in children's natural play and routines.

For example, how a child used their fine motor strength and control to manipulate fastenings while dressing or how they use a spoon to feed themselves.

Observing Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is about the mind and how children make sense of their world. It includes:

- thinking and reasoning,

- memory and learning,

- concentration and attention

- problem-solving

- understanding of concepts (i.e. colour, shape, letters, numbers, opposites, heat, light, gravity, living and non-living things, time and the meaning of right and wrong etc.

These skills and learning can be observed during play experiences throughout the day and transition times.

Example: Children can show problem-solving skills through puzzles or imaginative, dramatic play, or through science activities.

Observing Language Development

Language is the main way in which people communicate. Language can be verbal, non-verbal, comprehension, or written.

Language skills can be observed throughout many parts of the day. Children's free play as they communicate with others, group experiences as they listen, answer questions, and join in with discussions and during routine times such as toileting/nappy change time, mealtimes, and arrival and departure.

Observing Emotional Development

Emotional development is the ability to:

- express feelings

- control emotions

- form relationships and develop feelings towards other people

- develop a self-image and identity

- become an independent person

- nurture personal development (e.g. self-esteem and self-concept, self-reliance, and independence).

Emotional development can be observed at many times throughout the day (i.e. playtimes and routine times), although arrival and departure times are also very important times to observe as children separate from their parents. This will give you an understanding of how children are feeling, the relationships they have formed with others and strategies they use to deal with their emotions.

Observing Social Development

Social development includes:

- social roles and behaviour

- interaction and relationships

- social skills, e.g. sharing, taking turns, and co-operating with others

- social play, e.g. playing alone (solitary), playing alongside (parallel), using the same equipment but playing alone (associative play) or playing co-operatively, sharing, turn-taking and sharing ideas with others (co-operative play).

Social development can be observed throughout the day. Child-centred playtime and group experiences provide an opportunity to observe interactions and other social skills. Routine times, such as mealtime, also provide a great opportunity to observe how the children interact in a more structured social time.

Observing Creative Development

Creative development can be observed throughout the day during free play and group times, as well as during some routines and transitions.

Observing Different Age Groups

Observation to identify children's development, ideas, and interests to plan future experiences will also vary according to children's age groups. Consider developmental milestones and research peak bodies in children's development.

Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Observation techniques refer to the way of carrying out the process of observing.

2. Observation tools refer to the equipment or devices that you may use during observations.

3. Observation processes are the actions that are done to satisfy or complete the purpose of your observation.

Learning Activity for Chapter 1

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the classroom learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

II. Seek Information From Secondary Sources

As an educator that deals directly with children, your account of children's behaviour and development is based on your first-hand experience. This makes the records and transcripts of your observations a primary source of information. Other primary sources of information involve the accounts of those who also have direct experience with the event that happened, such as interview transcripts and recordings from their parents, families, carers, and other educators that work with them.

Secondary sources of information refer to those that interpret or review primary sources. These may include review papers, books, and other materials that discuss ways of dealing with children based on research.

Secondary sources are equally important as primary sources of information. You need to use research and commentary from experts and other authorities of your field to assess your findings from primary sources. The relationship between the two sources is vital in observing children to inform your practice.

This chapter will discuss how you can:

- use information from children's records and family to assist in curriculum planning

- collaborate with others to collect information about each child's needs, interests, skills and cultural practices.

2.1 Use Information From Children's Records and Family to Assist in Curriculum Planning

In the early childhood service, curriculum means 'all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.'

Sourced from The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, used under CC BY 4.0.

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Curriculum planning is an essential part of being an educator. This will help you:

- promote a child's learning and development

- document what you do in your workplace

- encourage colleagues to think about what they offer to a child and why

- share a child's experiences with their family

- create opportunities to reflect on and develop your own practice

- maintain legal requirements under the National Quality Standard (NQS)

National Quality Standard

Australia has recognised the importance of effective educational programs for young children and has set national quality standards to regulate education services. These are created to guide educators in creating curriculums and provide outlines for planning lessons and evaluating quality. As an educator, you are responsible for making sure that the children under your care have quality learning experiences.

The National Quality Standard includes the following seven Quality Areas:

- Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice

- Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety

- Quality Area 3 – Physical environment

- Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements

- Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children

- Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

- Quality Area 7 – Governance and leadership

Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at March 1, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation please go to https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

The first step in gathering information about a child is when families make contact with a service provider for the first time. You can then talk with family members and the child and gain some understanding of their family background, how they view their child, and what they hope their child will gain at the service. This continues throughout their care.

Children's records may contain information about their:

- behaviour

- behaviour strategies

- disabilities

- medications

- treatments

- emergency details

- favourite toys or objects

- routines

- interests

- skills

- preferences

- development stage

- Information about the home environment:

  o who lives in the home, such as extended family members, parents, and children?

  o languages spoken at home

  o family cultural background

  o employment and economic status

  o time available to spend with the child

  o family beliefs and values

Gathering as much information as you can from other people will assist you in understanding the context for the child's behaviour and in supporting the child in the most appropriate way.

Information may be gathered in the following ways:

enrolment forms

special purpose forms such as 'sleep and rest time' forms

interviews with parents

conversations with the child

conversations with the family

All of this information will be analysed and interpreted late on in the process of observation. Because of the information gathered by educators everywhere, there is valuable information that will be considered during the planning stage of the curriculum planning cycle.

Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Primary sources of information are those that have a direct or firsthand account of what happened.

2. Secondary sources of information refer to those that interpret or review primary sources.

2.1.1 Curriculum Planning Cycle

In order to plan and implement a curriculum, you need to collect and analyse information about what a child knows, does, and understands, and about their interests, skills, and strengths. This is an important part of the curriculum planning because if this information is used for making decisions about each child and how to build on their strengths, interests, and knowledge and support them in their learning and development.

The stages of the curriculum planning cycle include:

Gathering Information

This stage of curriculum planning involves gathering information that can be potentially useful in developing early childhood education curricula through sources, such as observation.

Questioning and Analysing Information

- Questioning involves formulating and asking questions related to the information collected that will lead to a better understanding of what should be included in the curriculum.

- Analysing information involves interpreting the information collected about children. This is usually done after answering the questions formulated after collecting information. The answers to the questions usually serve as the interpretation of information collected.

Planning

This stage of curriculum planning involves determining what to teach children based on the information collected and analysed from the previous stages.

Implementation

This stage of curriculum planning involves executing the curriculum as planned in the planning stage.

Review and Reflection

- Review involves evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum.

- Reflection involves analysing the review done for the curriculum and identifies what could have been done to improve the curriculum.

Below are some of the things you must consider for your curriculum planning stage:

Stages of Development

Children under your care may be at different stages of development depending on their age group or the period group they belong to. In order for your lessons and activities to be inclusive to all, you need to make sure that they are realistic and achievable for all children involved.

Subchapter 1.1 discussed the different stages of development in children. When you use information from children's records, these will show which stage of development a child belongs to. Keeping this in mind can help you adjust your curriculum planning to cater to the needs of every age group and development stage.

It is recommended that skills, abilities, and knowledge are the focus of your program. In this way, you are providing children with a positive environment that they feel capable of participating in.

The following tables in the succeeding pages provide an overview of developmental aspects and the skills and abilities you may expect to observe in children of different ages and stages of development.

At each stage of development, children learn in several areas at the same time.

There are five areas of human development, namely:

Physical Development	These are changes in the physical maturity of the body, such as in size and shapes, as well as physical abilities and coordination.
Intellectual Development	This includes learning and language, such as a child's ability to reason, problem-solve, and organise ideas. Therefore, the physical growth of the brain.
Social Development	This is the development of knowledge and skills needed to interact with others.
Emotional Development	This is related to a child's understanding of their own feelings and how to express them.
Moral Development	This is related to a child's understanding of what is right and wrong and related consequences.

A stage of development is referred to a particular age period when needs, behaviours, experiences, and capabilities are common and different from other age periods. Here are some behaviours you might expect to see at certain stages.

Age	Physical Aspects
0–3 months	- Brings hand to mouth - Takes swipes at dangling objects - Opens and shuts hands - Raises head momentarily while lying on stomach - Reflexively grasps finger or object placed in their hand
3–6 months	- Can reach for things voluntarily - Holds head upright in a sitting position - Holds head upright for longer periods while lying on stomach

Age	Communication Aspects
0–6 months	- Coos back and forth with caregiver - Capable of responding to their own name (4 to5 months) - Pays attention to human voices more than any other noise - Gives and receives communication - Imitates and responds to someone speaking
6–12 months	- Until 8 to 12 months, communicates by crying, cooing, babbling, imitating, making facial expressions, using body language and gestures - Can respond to simple verbal requests - Begins to imitate spoken words - First words may be spoken
12–24 months	- Has a vocabulary of approximately 5 to 20 words - Vocabulary is made up chiefly of nouns - May repeat a word or phrase over and over - Is able to follow simple commands
2–3 years	- Is able to name a number of common objects in their surroundings - Is able to use at least two prepositions, usually 'in', 'on' or 'under' - Approximately two-thirds of what the child says is intelligible - Has a vocabulary of approximately 150–300 words - Can use two pronouns correctly; for example, 'I', 'me' or 'you', although 'me' and 'I' are often confused - The words 'my' and 'mine' are beginning to emerge - Can respond to commands such as 'show me your nose'
3–5 years	- Uses clear speech with only a few grammatical errors - More complex speech patterns and vocabulary emerge - Asks questions - Tells stories and recalls past events - Understands advanced concepts such as 'same' and 'different' - May be capable of reciting their name and address

Age	Cognitive Aspects
6–12 months	▪ Gains information through all senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch ▪ Explores objects in a variety of ways; for example, by shaking, banging, or dropping them
12–24 months	▪ Recognises own facial features ▪ Acquires the notion of object permanence ▪ Begins to sort shapes and colours
2–3 years	▪ Problem-solving skills increase ▪ Can complete a four-piece puzzle ▪ Participates in make-believe play ▪ Can sort by shape and colour

Educational Programs and Practices

Quality Area 1 of the NQS outlines the standards for educational programs and practices. It outlines the following considerations:

▪ **Program**

The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.

   o Approved learning framework

   The curriculum must follow the approved learning framework for the service.

   o Child-centred

   The program is centred on the child.

   o Program learning opportunities

   The program provides children with maximum learning opportunities.

- **Practice**

  Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.

    o Intentional teaching

      Decisions are purposeful and deliberate.

    o Responsive teaching and scaffolding

      Educators are responsive and support children.

    o Child-directed learning

      The different agencies of a child are promoted.

- **Assessment and planning**

  Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

    o Assessment and planning cycle

      Learning and development is assessed and evaluated.

    o Critical reflection

      There is critical reflection on children's learning and development.

    o Information for families

      Families are informed of the educational program.

Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at March 1, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation please go to https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

Below are other considerations throughout your curriculum planning cycle:

- legal requirements

- workplace philosophy and approach

- context of your service (e.g. service type and the needs of children, families and community)

- your understanding of national standards

- purpose of the curriculum

- your teaching practices and how they support curriculum

- various documentation methods

- quality resources and materials to support the curriculum

- the environment to compliment curriculum plans

- documentation and assessment of the child

2.2 Collaborate With Others to Collect Information About Each Child's Needs, Interests, Skills and Cultural Practices

Collaborating with others is a great way to collect information about each child's needs, interests, skills, and cultural practices.

Through communication and collaboration, you can create an inclusive and culturally appropriate curriculum that complies with quality standards.

Families hold a wealth of information about their children, so you might be able to uncover some creative and fun ideas and better understand what the child might like and dislike.

Children's needs refer to the necessities that a child requires to grow and develop. Cultural practices are the acts repeatedly done based on a person's cultural background.

Collecting information about the children under your care involves interactive relationships with key stakeholders. These key stakeholders in the learning and development of children may include:

- Children

- Family

- Educators

- Carers and significant adults

- Community

- Other relevant professionals

Communicating with these key stakeholders is essential to plan the best and most inclusive program. Through communication and collaboration, you can create an inclusive and culturally appropriate curriculum.

At enrolment, families can complete a 'getting-to-know-you' form. This form would ask some general questions about the child's interests and friendships; for example, parents and families would share their unique knowledge about the child.

Ways of Collecting Information	From Whom	How They Can be Involved
Seeking information from families	Parents	Parents can provide important information about their child's behaviour, demeanour, and habits at home.
	Adult siblings	A child's behaviour may change when with their adult sibling than with their parents. Therefore, it is important to also seek information from them.
	Nannies	Since a nanny may spend more time with the child than their parents, a nanny may have more observations about the child's behaviours, mannerisms, and habits.
Using jottings and notes of incidental events	Children	Children must not be aware that they are being observed in order for them to behave naturally.
	Educators	Educators can be involved by jotting down and taking note of incidental events in the classroom.
	Psychiatrist	Psychiatrists can be involved by jotting down and taking note of incidental events or information that the child may divulge during sessions.
Taking photos of children's experiences	Community	Members of the community, such as parents of the child's playmates, can take photos of the children's experiences.
	Educators	Educators can take photos of the children's experiences and interactions in school.

Ways of Collecting Information	From Whom	How They Can be Involved
Collecting samples or copies of children's work	Nannies	A child's writing, drawing, or painting when being watched over by a nanny as compared to a parent or an adult sibling can provide useful information about what the child is feeling or thinking about the situation.
	Parents	A child's writing, drawing, or painting when being watched over by their parents as compared to a nanny or an adult sibling can provide useful information about what the child is feeling or thinking about the situation.
	Adult siblings	A child's writing, drawing, or painting when being watched over by an adult sibling as compared to a nanny or a parent can provide useful information about what the child is feeling or thinking about the situation.
	Tutor	Tutors can use the child's work to assess their learning progress then collaborate with an educator to address the child's learning needs.
Observing children's social play	Children	Children must not be aware that they are being observed in order for them to behave naturally when socialising with other children.
Observing children's social play	Community	Members of the community, such as parents of the child's playmates, can take photos of the children's social experiences.
	School security guard	A school security guard can draw observations from the children's outdoor playtimes.

Part of your role is to show families that you value their contributions, as this will encourage them to continue to share information about their child. After enrolment, ongoing conversations are a friendlier, less formal, and usually a more useful way to communicate than filling in forms, although updated forms may be requested as children move to a new room or when they reach a certain age to ensure the information is current.

There are various ways you collect information. Some common methods are outlined in the following paragraphs:

Discussion with Families

Orientation is a time to collect documentation about children and their families and to develop open verbal communication. Services should update their documentation and information regularly, but the daily discussions you have with parents can provide valuable information when asking questions and listening to the details parents share with you.

Questioning

Some ways of questioning and reviewing information include daily evaluation sheets, surveys, questionnaires, and forms. A daily evaluation sheet asks others to evaluate how the day went by providing specific questions, such as what activities were enjoyed most, what could be extended, or what ways the curriculum can be improved.

'Graffiti sheets' can also be used to brainstorm, ask a question and have various people add their ideas to it. However, not all questioning is useful. Sometimes, children respond inappropriately or provide a response that they think you or their peers would like to hear rather than responding honestly. Verbal questioning may be recorded in a variety of ways; for example, you may use a jotting or anecdotal record, tick off a checklist, or make notes against an anticipated set of responses.

Below are some communication techniques for questioning that you may use:

- Use open-ended questions to gain more perspective and details, such as:
    o How did you feel about it?
    o What was the effect of that on the children?
- Close-ended questions may also be used for clarification, such as:
    o So, you agree with this process?
    o You mean they have always done it, right?
- Lead the conversation using leading questions, such as:
    o This way is more efficient, right? (look for agreement)
    o How early do you think this can be implemented? (add an assumption)
    o Would you rather do we stick to this or the new one? (provide options)

Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

Quality Area 6 of the NQS outlines the standards for collaborative partnerships with families and communities. It outlines the following considerations:

- **Supportive relationships with families**

    Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained, and families are supported in their parenting role.

    o   Engagement with the service

    Families are involved in service decisions.

    o   Parent views are respected

    Families are encouraged to share in the decision making with respect to their views.

    o   Families are supported

    Information about the program and service is shared with the families.

- **Collaborative partnerships**

    Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning, and wellbeing.

    o   Transitions

    Transitions are supported by clarifying roles and responsibilities.

    o   Access and participation

    Children are allowed access and encouraged to participate in the program.

    o   Community engagement

    The service engages with the community.

    Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at March 1, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation please go to https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

Many of the observation tools that educators use today allow for or have a space for a parent's 'voice' to be included in the report.

Always ensure that information collected through observation and secondary sources is discussed with relevant staff and recorded accurately in accordance with service requirements.

Below are some communication techniques that you may use:

- Proceed with communication slowly so that nobody among the people involved is left behind in the discussion

- Keep the number of people in a group small to gain better control of the conversation

- Provide service standards, policies, and procedures that will encourage collaboration between the centre and the families and communities (e.g. transparency of centre policies, easy access to information about the centre, service and industry)

Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures on family and community engagement through the link below:

Family and Community Engagement Policy

(username: newusername   password: new password)

Checkpoint! Let's Review

The curriculum planning cycle includes the following steps:

1. Gathering information

2. Questioning and analysing information

3. Planning

4. Implementation

5. Review and reflection

Learning Activity for Chapter 2

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the classroom learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

III. Record and Communicate Information

Once you have your sources, you can record the information you have gathered and communicate them to relevant people. Recording and communication are vital parts of observation. Recording allows you to review the information you have and share them.

This chapter will discuss how you can:

- observe the child and accurately record meaningful information according to service policies and procedures

- discuss information gathered with relevant people to inform planning

- discuss and record information in ways that are free from bias and negative labelling of children.

3.1 Observe the Child and Accurately Record Meaningful Information According to Service Policies and Procedures

Accurately recording meaningful information means that your observations are correct, truthful, and objective. At the same time, not all information that you may observe is meaningful. Meaningful information is those that align with the objective of your observation.

To identify meaningful information, ask yourself the following:

- What is the purpose of the observation?

- What are the necessary outcomes of this observation?

- What are the expected outcomes of this observation?

- Does this information have an impact on what you are trying to understand?

- Will this information influence your interpretation of what happened?

An accurate record reports what actually occurred, rather than what you think has happened or how you feel about what you have observed. It requires a non-judgmental approach to ensure that the child is not labelled in a negative or positive way. By doing this, your report will be free from bias. To provide a fair and factual account, an objective record must not include personal opinions. When a record is neutral or objective, the reader can easily understand what has occurred. There is no need to record why you think the child did something or what you expect they were thinking.

The following table shows the ways in how you can record meaningful information:

Ways to Make and Document Meaningful Observations	Description	How This Can Help in Making Meaningful Observations	How This Can Help in Documenting Meaningful Observations
Using objective language rather than subjective language	Using objective language means that the observations are based only on facts and are free from assumptions about why they occurred.	By using objective language, an observer ensures that their notes include only what they saw or heard and do not include assumptions or opinions.	By using objective language, an observer ensures that the documented observations are credible and does not include assumptions or opinions.
Avoidance of labelling	The avoidance of labelling means that the observer does not categorise the children into labels such as noisy, shy, or grumpy.	By avoiding labelling, the observer remains neutral by not inserting positive or negative connotations into the children's behaviours.	By avoiding labelling, the documented observations remain credible by not containing any negative opinion about a child's behaviour.

Ways to Make and Document Meaningful Observations	Description	How This Can Help in Making Meaningful Observations	How This Can Help in Documenting Meaningful Observations
Writing in the past tense	Writing in the past tense is the use of verbs to emphasise that the events under observation have occurred in the past.	Using the past tense during observations allows the observer to categorise their observation notes in a non-chronological order.	Using the past tense in documenting observations can help other people who would be reading the documents to visualise the observations as events that have already happened.
Writing in the present tense	Writing in the present tense is the use of verbs to emphasise that the events under observation are occurring in the present.	Using the present tense during observations can help the observer relive the events when reviewing their observation notes.	Using the present tense in documenting observations can help other people who would be reading the documents to picture the events as something that is happening in the present.

Ways to Make and Document Meaningful Observations	Description	How This Can Help in Making Meaningful Observations	How This Can Help in Documenting Meaningful Observations
Avoidance of bias	Avoidance of bias means that the observer treats every child equally and does not have a stereotyped attitude towards children of different racial, cultural, religious, and social backgrounds.	Avoidance of bias can help prevent discrimination towards children.	Avoidance of bias can help make the documented observations more credible by not containing any racial, cultural, or religious prejudices.

All service organisations will have policies and procedures on how to observe and record information based on regulations that need to be complied with. All documentation about children is confidential. It is for the purpose of supporting curriculum planning. You must make sure parents provide permission to use these records within the service for planning purposes.

Parental permission must be obtained prior to the records being shown to any person outside the service or being used for any purpose other than for program planning. You must also store your records in a place where unauthorised people cannot read or access them, for example, in a lockable filing cabinet.

Permission to Observe a Child

Before you decide to observe a child at your workplace, you must be familiar with your workplace policies on observing children. Find out what those policies are and make sure you follow them. You must familiarise yourself with the policies and apply them in your daily tasks. If you are not sure where those are kept, you should speak to your supervisor.

Once you are familiar with the policy for the centre, you must obtain written permission from the parents to observe a child. You must NEVER observe or photograph a child without written and signed consent. Doing so would be illegal and goes against professional practice. Your workplace would have a parental permission form, and often, this is signed at the enrolment interview.

Key considerations for collecting information include:

Information Confidentiality

When a family or other secondary source provides you with information, it is essential that you handle it confidentially. Confidentiality applies to all types of shared information and may include details held on enrolment forms, developmental information, or day-to-day information shared at drop-off and pick-up times.

To maintain confidentiality, you must never leave any documentation where others can access it, such as on benchtops, in staff rooms, or in your car. It must be stored appropriately, for example, in a lockable filing cabinet, where access is restricted to authorised people.

The information you gather, record, and work with must be available to parents at their request, and their permission must be obtained before any records or information is shared with any person outside your service.

Relationships grow through respect and trust. Making and sharing judgments with others not only breaches confidentiality but is also unprofessional and may compromise your relationship with families and children. For example, if you overstep these boundaries by involving yourself in casual conversation about a family or child, it can be damaging to your reputation and may even cost you your job.

The Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics provides guidance regarding confidentiality and your responsibilities to families, children, colleagues, communities, students, employers, and yourself.

When you are interpreting documentation and other records about children, you need to identify specific information to help you plan appropriate experiences for the child or group of children.

Privacy

When dealing with children's records, be sure to act in accordance with privacy laws, particularly the Privacy Act 1988. The Privacy Act 1988 outlines 13 Australian Privacy Principles that service providers must observe when handling personal and sensitive information of people.

Under this legislation:

In relation to privacy:

▪ Individual must have access to their records when reasonable and practicable.

▪ Individual must be given access to their records in the manner requested.

In relation to confidentiality:

▪ Information about the child must be kept confidential.

▪ Information about the child is only given to authorised individuals.

Changes in Child or Family Circumstances

Over time, children and families change. Therefore, it is vital that you continually reflect on whether the practices used still meet the needs of new and existing families. You must keep the lines of communication open and stay up to date with any changes. You should also help families understand how the framework will support their children's learning by providing tips that are clear and easy to understand.

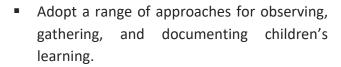You can involve families in the process by:

▪ Asking for feedback about the best way to share information

▪ Asking families to contribute to children's discussions and their observations

▪ Having a section in the documentation for the parent's voice

▪ Asking families specific questions relating to the observation or learning story

▪ Keeping a written record of parent feedback in conversations

- Providing a 'Take home' toy and journal for families to join in the experiences

- Wherever possible, providing documentation in various languages

- Sharing examples of family feedback

- Communicating regularly with the family via email and other forms

- Allowing sufficient time and space for the family to review all information relating to their child

Gather Information

Children will demonstrate their learning in many and varied ways. Therefore, the ways of gathering, documenting and analysing evidence to assess learning in your centre may also need to be varied.

Documenting and assessing learning enables educators in partnership with families, children, and other professionals to collaborate in the following:

- Adopt a range of approaches for observing, gathering, and documenting children's learning.

- Use evidence to inform future planning, reflect on the effectiveness of teaching, make judgements about a child's developing capabilities, and respond in appropriate ways.

- Use the learning outcomes of approved learning frameworks as key reference points against which children's progress can be accessed and communicated.

- Engage children as active participants in recording and reflecting on their learning and the processes of learning.

- Share information and strengthen partnerships to support children's learning in and beyond the early childhood program.

- Consider and evaluate curriculum, practices, and relationships.

Observations can be carried out during daily routines, while children interact with peers, while they do activities, or while they use materials. Observations can also happen spontaneously. Before you observe a child, you should have a clear reason for doing so.

Consider the following:

- The context such as what is specific to a family, community and children's culture

- The child's interests, abilities, and strengths

- The environment such as your workplace and the resources and materials available

- The child's routines such as sleep time or mealtime

- The relationships such as who is important in the child's life

- The expectations of the family

- Each family member(s) name and who is appropriate to discuss the child with.

- Any outings and excursions

During a child observation, you should pay particular attention to what the child is doing, how they interact with other children, and what they say. You should position yourself in a place close enough to the child to hear the conversation but far enough that you are not intrusive and disruptive. You should write down your observations for review later.

Consider the following when taking notes:

Background Details	Include child's age, date of the observation, setting, other children involved, as well as your name
Play Behaviours	Outline play behaviours that you see. For example: playing in the sand trough, filling up the bucket with sand, fills the bucket to the top.
Positive Language	Use positive language. Outline what the child is doing. Do not use judgemental language, e.g. excellent, silly, wrong (these are judgemental words and do not describe what is happening).
Be Factual	Describe only what is actually happening in a certain observation.
Be Relevant	Include only details of direct quotes and information about what is actually happening.
Be Objective	Provide only factual details during the observation. For example, May put the doll on the table, picks up a spoon and pretends to feed the doll— 'yummy rice,' she says.
Avoid Being Subjective	Do not include your opinions, your personal experiences, your thoughts, or your judgements when writing down observations. For example, May has been crying because her doll is broken and is scared that she will be thrown away (this is a perception of what you think is May's feelings and an example of being subjective)

Remember, when you document the observation, only note down what you have observed and heard and only state the facts. Do not use subjective and judgemental language, and do not include your own views, values, feelings that influence what you write down.

Service Policies and Procedures

Service policies and procedures, as well as service standards, are benchmarks, rules, and/or guidelines that the centre implements to be able to provide a high-quality early childhood education and care service. In the context of the topic, this includes how you will observe and record information. In this aspect, here as examples of service policies and procedures that may be applied to the observation of children and recording of their information.

- **Educational Program and Practice**

    o Observation of children and recording of information should comply with the requirements indicated in the National Quality Framework, which includes the NQS, National Law and Regulations, assessment and quality ratings, and the approved national learning frameworks.

    o Early childhood professionals should have the right qualifications to be able to work in early childhood education and care services.

- **Relationship with Children**

    o Children should be observed in a way that is morally and ethically sound. Do not observe at inappropriate times.

    o Observation should not disrupt the activities and interactions done by the children.

- **Collaborative Partnership with Families and Communities**

    o Parents and guardians should have the decision on how their children should be observed.

    o Information about children should be confidential, except for the children's parents, and they should have access to their information from the centre.

Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures on confidentiality through the link below:

[Confidentiality Policy]

(username: newusername   password: new password)

Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Meaningful information means that your observations are correct, truthful, and objective.

2. Meaningful information is those that align with the objective of your observation.

3. All service organisations will have policies and procedures on how to observe and record information based on regulations that need to be complied with.

Further Reading

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has a National Quality Standard with a comprehensive guide on quality areas. You can access them through the link below:

[National Quality Standard]

3.2 Discuss Information Gathered with Relevant People to Inform Planning

All the information that you have gathered through your observations and collaborations must be discussed with relevant people. These relevant people include families, your supervisor, or any required authority, depending on your organisational hierarchy.

Families have the right to be involved in the service program. Any information gathered about their children must be disclosed to them. Similarly, your organisation or centre needs to be aware of the information that you gather in informing your practice. To discuss the information you have gathered, you may do the following:

Set Up a Communication Plan

A communication plan is used to schedule when and what you need to communicate to someone. You may ask families when they prefer to be notified and what information is sensitive for them. You may also consult your organisational policies and procedures to know about mandatory reporting requirements.

Collate All the Information You Have Gathered

Keep all of the information you gathered organised. Knowing where you keep every specific information can help you out in conveying information to relevant people. You can keep hard copies of important files, or you may opt for softcopies to ensure all information has a backup.

Be Straightforward

Straight off the bat, let relevant people know that your purpose for observing is to inform your practice for the benefit of the children. Be honest about the kind of information you gather and why it significant for you to do so. Relay all the information you have and the circumstances in which they were gathered and used.
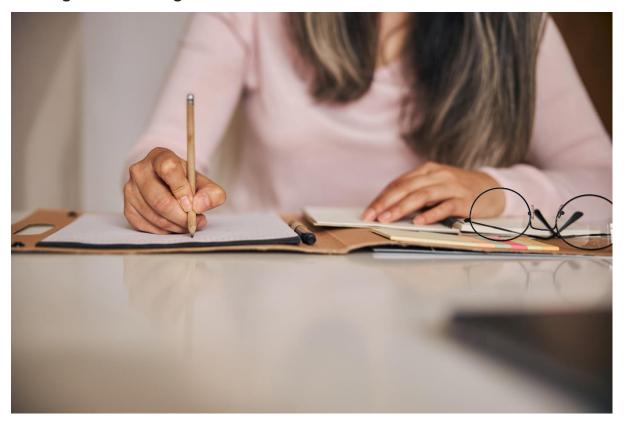
Some helpful tips for communicating with families include:

- Get to know each other on a first-name basis.
- Learn the names of all the family, including immediate and extended family members.
- Explain to parents why they need to communicate with the centre.
- Do not feel intimidated by a parent or community member, and be sure not to intimidate them in any way.
- Adapt your language to suit the individual or group of people you are speaking to.
- Develop appropriate communication with parents and community members.
- Provide a comfortable environment when liaising with parents and staff.

You need to use the observations you have collected to provide the best outcomes for children. If you need to discuss information with others, you must follow all the guidelines for doing so and discuss the information with appropriate people.

Your observations will also influence the service program. Your program is influenced by the records gathered about each child, as well as by your pedagogy (professional practice). You can use the information gathered to provide appropriate experiences, routines, and interactions that reflect the interests and needs of individual children and the group. This recorded information also ensures quality program planning and educator interactions for children.

3.3 Discuss and Record Information in Ways That are Free From Bias and Negative Labelling of Children

In all your documentation, you must ensure all records are free from bias and stereotyping. Be aware that sometimes personal prejudices can interfere with your view of a child.

Bias refers to the unbalanced or unfair opinion you have over one thing. Negative labelling is when you attach a negative assumption to a child based on a biased opinion.

Always keep in mind that you only need to record exactly what you see. As mentioned in many sections of this learner guide, avoid recording your own opinions or views and only describe the child's behaviour as it is happening without assumptions. This is part of your ethical practice. Doing otherwise compromises the integrity of the information you gathered.

The same thing must be done when you are discussing information with relevant people. It is extremely unprofessional to talk negatively about the children in your care. Never use negative labelling when referring to children during conversations; not only do you risk offending people, but this also reflects poorly on your services.

Here are some examples of biased statements. These are not accurate and reflect negative stereotypes.

- 'That boy is just like his brother—always fighting with everyone. It is probably a family trait. '

- 'Jake's parents are so lazy. I have never seen them hold a job in all the time Jake has been in the centre. '

- 'I do not understand why we have children with disabilities at this centre. It is much easier caring for children that are normal.'

Bias and stereotypical attitudes will affect the quality of your observation in the following ways:

- An observation may only contain the child's negative or difficult behaviour and not reflect anything positive about the child.

- Detailed observations may only be thorough for children that you really like and less detailed for the children that you dislike.

- An observation may contain a racist attitude to describe a child's behaviour. For example, 'Ming only ever speaks Cantonese; it is terrible when she refuses to speak English.'

In your role, you also have the duty of care to address and report these biases and stereotypical attitudes. You should consider how you would approach a colleague that is continually making biased and stereotyped comments about a child or various children in their observations. A set of guidelines, such as the ECA Code of Ethics, provides a useful tool to deal with these situations.

Further Reading

The Early Childhood Australia website has information on the Code of Ethics that you can use. Follow the link below to access the resource:

Code of Ethics

When discussing and recording information, remember the following:

Refrain from Negative Observations

When you provide observations with judgements about a child, these are negative and critical. You should keep your personal feelings away from observations. Consider the feelings of the family when reading bias statements, such as:

- 'Tom was annoying this morning.'

- 'Tara is a difficult girl. She keeps fighting with the other kids.'

'Annoying' and 'difficult' are both negative labels. An accurate record should include a description of both these children's words and actions (positive and negative). The observation should only include information that communicates to all parties the concern and attention. Instead, you may word your observation this way:

- 'Tom refused to join the morning play activity and chose to play by himself in a corner.'

- 'Tara grabbed the toy train held by Jenny and hit her in the arm.'

Avoid Over-Generalised Positive Labelling

Although you may be positive and optimistic in your observations, being 'over-positive' in your statements is also a bias. Some examples of over-positive labelling are:

- 'Lucy is a very good girl; she has lovely manners. '

- 'Ben's very smart for his age. His work is always perfect, and he learns everything immediately. '

These comments are too general and not factual. They are also biased as they may be interpreted as you have a preference for certain children over the others.

Have an Optimistic Outlook

When you focus your statements on an optimistic outlook, you will make positive statements about a child, and your observations will outline what they can do rather than what they cannot do.

In your role, it is good to view children with honest optimism and not let the fact that you might, in general, find everything a child does to be wonderful. By having an optimistic approach, you will be able to recognise what children cannot do and respect what they can do.

Judgement, Assumptions, and Negativity

You should be careful with the words you use to describe children, as they can reflect your optimistic or negative view of a child. Take a look and compare both in these examples:

Negative view

- Sam never likes to join in with group time activities.

Positive view

- Sam prefers to watch others during group-time activities, but he is not yet ready to join them.

Learning Activity for Chapter 3

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the classroom learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

IV. Analyse and Interpret Information and Observations

Analysis is the process of examining information and looking at its parts to understand it. Interpretation is the process of explaining a piece of information based on your understanding. Both processes are important in order for you to understand how information and observations can inform your practice.

This chapter will discuss how you can:

- reflect on information gathered from observations and secondary sources
- identify and use opportunities to discuss reflections with colleagues and gain their perspectives
- identify learning and development aspects of the child based on gathered information
- determine and document links to the approved learning framework.

4.1 Reflect on Information Gathered from Observations and Secondary Sources

Reflection is the act of exploring one's thoughts and feelings and trying to understand the reasoning behind them. Meaningful reflection is the deliberate act of reflection to thoroughly question your own views and opinions and identify ways for improvement. Engaging in reflection is expected of you in Early Childhood Education and Care. It is a process of thinking about your own perspectives, values, beliefs, skills, and experiences in relation to other views and being open to changing your own if needed. As such, educators use reflective practice as a continuous learning experience that allows them to question and assess their practice.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions, developing more specific questions for particular areas of enquiry.

Overarching questions to guide reflection include:

- What are my understandings of each child?

- What theories, philosophies, and understandings shape and assist my work?

- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?

- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?

- What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do

Identify What Can Be Learnt from the Observations

Information gathered about children through observation, discussions, and secondary sources will be valuable in the planning of a curriculum that promotes children's learning and development. This is the 'interpret and question' part of the planning cycle.

Assessing this information allows educators to establish baselines and monitor children's progress towards learning outcomes. This also allows educators to plan for guidance, interventions, curriculum changes, communicate with parents and allow administrative decisions to be made.

Ways of questioning information to gain a better understanding of children's needs and learning opportunities include:

- Ask yourself clarifying questions to understand the information.

- Confirm the connection of different information to your objectives.

- Ask how the information can support your conclusions.

- Ask how the information can improve existing practices.

Meanwhile, ways of reviewing information to gain a better understanding of children's needs and learning opportunities include:

- Review the information gathered as soon as possible to check the details.

- Compare details from similar information.

- Highlight significant parts that stand out to you.

- Verify if the information gathered is relevant to your objective.

- Check if the information is sufficient to answer your questions.

- Check if the information is credible.

- Collate similar information or categorise them for better reviewing.

If the curriculum is planned to ensure realistic goals are attainable for most children within a designated age range, then children will be able to achieve objectives and meet the learning outcomes of the National Quality Framework.

The Framework puts the responsibility on providers to consider ways in which they can continuously improve quality. Within the framework, practitioners are encouraged to reflect upon the key issues that are vital for its success. However, the process of reflective practice does not just happen because someone says it should. Reflection can only be meaningful with a shared overall goal to achieve effective early learning and positive experiences for children. The Educators guide to the early years learning framework explains exactly what an educator needs to do to implement reflective practice into everyday activities.

Reflection before Practice:

Before practising, you should reflect on the following:

- Your professional knowledge and understanding of the strengths and interests of each child and family

- The children and families' contributions, including what they are saying and doing.

- The different cultures you are working with and ways of knowing and being

- The overall community priorities are for your workplace

- The information you have collected and evidence you are showing of this thinking.

Reflection after Practice:

After applying the curriculum, you should reflect on:

- What works and what can be improved

- How you have ensured and considered children's belonging, being and becoming

- How you have considered children that are privileged or disadvantaged

- How you have accommodated children's learning styles

- How you are assessing children's learning and preparing to scaffold and extend learning

- How you are obtaining feedback from colleagues, children, families, and the community

- How are children and families involved in the assessing process

- How you re documenting the learning journey and how it is shared with children, families, and the community

Sourced from The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, *used under* CC BY 4.0.

© Commonwealth of Australia

You will regularly and systematically look at observations, samples of a child's work, photographs, and information shared by the family, and then you should reflect on the following questions:

- How does the information fit together?

- How does the information link to the learning outcomes set prior?

- What does it tell you about how the child's learning and development have progressed?'

Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Reflection is the act of exploring one's thoughts and feelings and trying to understand the reasoning behind them.

2. Meaningful reflection is the deliberation act of reflection to thoroughly question your own views and opinions.

4.2 Identify and Use Opportunities to Discuss Reflections With Colleagues and Gain Their Perspectives

Through meaningful reflections, you can understand how you can further improve your practice. You will gain insight into how your practice affects your relationship with children and vice versa.

When you reflect on your relationships with the children in your care, you examine your own behaviours and question how your own values, beliefs, and worldview might contribute to these in both positive and negative ways.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- Do I always use a calm and gentle manner when interacting with children?

- Do I show children that I value them and am interested in what they are doing?

- Do I use positive communication techniques?

- Does my non-verbal communication match what I say?

4.2.1 Opportunities to Discuss Reflections with Colleagues

Discussing your reflections with colleagues is an excellent way to share your observations and inputs on how to improve your practice in caring for and teaching children.

Below are some of the opportunities you can use to discuss your reflections with colleagues:

Online Collaboration	Social media or online sites are a great way for educators you collaborate and to encourage and support one another by sharing reflections. Blogs are also another way as a learning space online.
Meetings	Staff meetings provide an opportunity to discuss and reflect on practices with your colleagues. Meetings should have a facilitator to guide the reflective process and note down the discussions.
Discussions with Management and Mentors	These are a great source of feedback; by asking questions and being guided by your mentors, you will see different perspectives feel challenged and encouraged.
Postings in Notice Boards	Reflective notice boards should be easily located, such as in the staff room, foyer, and each room for highlighting reflective practice. You can use those to post events, quotes, questions, articles, pictures, and anything related to reflective practice.

4.2.2 Gain the Perspectives of Colleagues

Gaining the perspective of your colleagues gives you an opportunity to learn and draw on diverse knowledge, views, experiences, and attitudes within yourself and others.

To gain the perspective of your colleagues, you may do the following:

- **Send requests for meetings and discussions**

  Take the initiative to discuss what you want to know from your colleagues. Ask them about their opinions and views.

- **Inquire about experiences**

  An effective way to gain someone's perspective is by asking them about their experiences and opinions. Knowing about a person's experience can give you an insight into how they view certain situations.

Below are some things to remember when gaining the perspective of your colleagues:

- **Be open-minded**

    Every person has a different perspective on things depending on their experiences. Allow your colleagues to speak their minds and listen to what they have to share without bias.

- **Be respectful**

    Differences can cause tension and misunderstandings. Always respect other people's opinions and understand that their experience of similar situations may be very different from yours. Avoid using profanities or any unprofessional language that may offend your colleagues.

- **Do not take things personally**

    Remember that you and your colleagues are professionals with similar reasons for observing children; you all want to improve your practice. Every suggestion must be taken with a grain of salt and considered.

4.3 Identify Learning and Development Aspects of the Child Based on Gathered Information

Once you have gathered the information of a child based on your observations, you should identify the learning and development aspects of each child based on the general areas of development and how they align with general developmental milestones.

Learning aspects refer to the stage of learning that a child is in. Development aspects are directly related to the learning aspects of a child and refer to the development stage that they belong to.

To identify the learning and development aspects of each child based on the information you gathered, you may follow the steps below:

1. **Categorise the information gathered**

   These may be into different learning and development stages or age groups.

2. **Determine learning and development milestones**

   You may research the milestones that apply to the children under your care.

3. **Compare information gathered against standard milestones**

   You will need to analyse the information you gathered about each child and compare it with existing milestones to identify learning and development aspects.

4. **Analyse the results of your comparison**

   The learning and development aspects of each child would depend on which milestone their information is closest for their age group. You may refer to Subchapter 1.1 for the discussion on different development stages.

4.4 Determine and Document Links to the Approved Learning Framework

There are two nationally approved learning frameworks for educational programs in Australia:

- Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), for children below five years old.

- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, for school-age children.

With an existing approved learning framework for Victoria:

- The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Early childhood education and care services are required by the law to follow the approved learning frameworks in their education programs.

To determine which approved learning framework applies to your service, you may do the following:

Identify the Scope of Your Service

It is important that you are aware of the extent of your services. Answering the following questions can help you identify the scope of your services:

- Who are my services for?

- How old will the children under my care be?

- What development stage are these children in?

- What are the services that I will be providing?

- Where will my services be provided?

Consult with Your Supervisor

You may always inquire about existing learning frameworks used by your organisation. Your supervisor can help you identify the best learning framework that you can use. You may also inquire about the historically used frameworks of your organisation for services similar to yours.

To give focus on the early childhood education and care setting, the approved framework that has been referenced multiple times in this learner guide is the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

Links, also known as hyperlinks, are routers that allow you to follow or move to a new location. To document links to the approved learning framework, you may keep a record of the links you have used to access or research about EYLF. You may keep your documentations as online files, or you may keep them as hardcopies and printed documents.

Learning Activity for Chapter 4

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the classroom learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

V. Contribute to Curriculum Planning

Everything you have learned so far about observation is for informing your practice. Your analysis and interpretation of the information and observations you gathered are valuable to the improvement of your service. You are responsible for contributing to the curriculum planning stage of your educational program.

In this chapter, you will learn how you can:

- use information gathered and own reflections about the child to contribute to the planning of programs that promote children's learning, development and wellbeing

- use information gathered about the child to support interactions that are responsive and respectful of individual needs.

5.1 Use Information Gathered and Own Reflections About the Child to Contribute to the Planning of Programs That Promote Children's Learning, Development and Wellbeing

There is no prescribed way to develop a curriculum format. However, you will have your own thoughts and ideas on how to best implement the elements of the EYLF.

Programs refer to the planned activities for children. This may include their daily routines and transitions. Based on your own reflections on the information you gathered, you will be able to determine which processes and practices work and which do not. Practices that resulted in negative outcomes need to be updated or changed completely. On the other hand, those that you have observed to yield positive results need to be kept in the program to support growth.

Learning is the act of acquiring knowledge. Educational programs are required to promote children's learning. Development goes hand in hand with learning. It refers to the changes that occur as the child grows. Well-being is the overall feeling of satisfaction, health, and happiness.

Though different, curriculum planning, in general, should include the following information:

Learning Outcomes

You should use learning outcomes as headings on the curriculum plan; this is a simple way to identify what the objectives or goals are for each experience planned. It will enable you to quickly determine which outcome children should achieve through each experience.

Play-Based Learning

You should use the following headings to emphasise a play-based learning approach:

- **Sensory Play**

  This refers to learning through the senses.

- **Exploratory Play**

  This is learning through finding things out.

- **Manipulative Play**

  This is learning through touching, feeling, and manipulating.

- **Dramatic Play**

  This is learning through role-playing or pretending.

- **Creative Play**

  This is learning through creation.

The headings also give you an indication of the types of activities children will be engaged in throughout the day within their learning environment.

Child Development

You should incorporate children's developmental stages in your curriculum plan with a focus on the learning outcomes. These to determine a child's overall achievements. Here are some examples of how learning outcomes are linked to children development:

- **Learning Outcome 1**

  Children Have A Strong Sense of Identity links to Emotional Development.

- **Learning Outcome 2**

  Children Are Connected With & Contribute to Their World links to Social Development.

- **Learning Outcome 3**

  Children Have A Strong Sense of Wellbeing links to Physical Development.

- **Learning Outcome 4**

  Children Are Confident and Involved learner's links to Cognitive Development

- **Learning Outcome 5**

  Children Are Effective Communicators links to Language Development.

Interest Areas

You should consider the children's interests when setting up the physical environment and split this into the various interest areas. These should be outlined in your curriculum plan. Experiences and activities that children engage in can be outlined under each of the interest areas.

Identify Positive Examples from Own Observations

Positive examples refer to those that result in the achievement of planned learning outcomes. To identify positive examples from your own observations, you may:

- **Use expert judgement:**
    - Be confident in your own assessment of how your curriculum impacted the children in your care.
    - Reflect on what behaviours and practices you exemplified for each example.
- **Use a journal or work diary**
    - Logging your daily experiences can help you monitor changes and identify positive practices that result in children's development.

When identifying examples, remember to focus on those that had a positive impact on the development of children and had led to achieving learning outcomes. This is a great way for you to identify which part of your curriculum worked and why.

Identify Positive Examples through Workplace Observation

Opportunities to develop your own practice is not limited to your own experiences. You may also collaborate with the educators and adults at your learning centre. Learning about their experiences can help you compare and analyse practices to help improve yours.

To identify positive examples through workplace observation, you may:

- **Ask your colleagues if you can observe them during learning experiences**
    - This will allow you to observe them while interacting with children and help you understand what practices are effective.
- **Observe children's development based on the different curriculum they are exposed to**
    - This will allow you to compare the existing curricula in your centre and identify which areas of each are effective.

Extensions to Learning

By understanding where a child is in respect to the curriculum, program goals, and objectives and how this meets the learning outcomes, you can suggest enhancing experiences or alternative activities, even new items, toys, or games that will further develop or enhance the child's skills.

Whenever you complete an observation, consider what the child can do next to assist them in their development.

Your Contribution to Program Planning

Through your everyday observations and the information you have gathered, you will notice whether children are engaging or participating in programmed activities and experiences. You will take into account what is working and what is not, and it is important that you relay that information to supervisors.

In your observations, it is possible that you may notice:

- The play environment is too challenging, leading to children becoming frustrated

- The play environment is not stimulating enough, leading to children becoming bored

- Play environment does not provide an opportunity for the child's interests/needs

- Child's reactions to the play environment

- Child's play interests

Making Improvements

Analysing observations will also allow you to contribute to the Quality Improvement program within your centre. This allows all staff to consider how the existing program is meeting the standards and how best to introduce improvements to enhance the quality of education for all children.

By summing up what has been gathered, educators gain a greater insight into children's relationships with others, the cultural context of the information, children's interactions, and children's learning styles and interests in a holistic way.

During this process, educators draw on educational theories and knowledge to support their interpretations of where the child is at and where they need to go next.

Developing reflective practice requires commitment from everyone to analyse the perceptions of practice and look for opportunities to improve learning.

Being reflective:

- Demonstrates that educators are actively concerned about the outcomes of the work they are doing

- Enables educators to monitor, evaluate, and revise their own practice continuously

- Requires the capacity for educators to look carefully at practice in order to develop new skills and understanding

- Requires a progressive approach

- Enhances both professional development and personal fulfilment through collaboration and dialogue between colleagues.

What does reflection involve?

- Reflection 'in' action, or thinking on your feet

- Reflection 'on' action, or after the event

- Own thoughts and ideas

- Colleagues' thoughts and ideas

- Children and parents' thoughts and ideas

- Feedback from other partners or agencies

- Views and knowledge gained from personal experiences and that of research

Your approach to reflection as a team must:

- Give time to the process as a team

- Be clear about what you are reflecting on

- Consider the subject, making links to theory and practice

- Consider current practice

- Look for:
  - ways to improve,
  - ways to maintain, and
  - most importantly, act upon what you have discovered

- Structure your actions with timescales, responsibilities, and the opportunity to reflect on what you have achieved (or not)

- Provide feedback to colleagues, reflecting upon your actions

- Make further changes or adjustments when required

- Be aware of the reflective 'tools' that are available to you, such as quality improvement or self-evaluation forms

What do you want to achieve?

- Effective early learning experiences for children

- New ways of seeing familiar things

- Personal and professional development

- Continuous quality improvement

- A shared understanding

5.2 Use Information Gathered About the Child to Support Interactions That are Responsive and Respectful of Individual Needs

Experiences and activities added to the curriculum plan under each relevant heading are the activities that the children will be engaged in any given week. Responsive means that you are active and respond quickly. Being respectful entails active listening, scaffolding, and building a relationship of trust.

Relationships with Children

Quality Area 5 of the NQS outlines the standards for relationships with children. It outlines the following considerations:

- **Relationships between educators and children**

  Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.

  o Positive educator to child interactions

  Interactions are responsive and meaningful geared towards building trust.

  o Dignity and rights of the child

  The rights and dignity of a child are protected.

- **Relationships between children**

  Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.

  - Collaborative learning

    Opportunities are provided to allow collaboration between children.

  - Self-regulation

    Children are encouraged and supported to regulate their own behaviours.

Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at March 1, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation please go to https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

To decide which activities are appropriate, you will need to look at the collection of information from your observation. Review your reflections and identify how you can translate these into building better relationships with children.

You should use information gathered about children when thinking about experiences for them to extend their interests, develop further learning, or master a skill. You can also use these pieces of information when incorporating parent suggestions into the curriculum or addressing individual children's needs.

Tips for Responding to Children Positively and Respectfully

- Make sure you have the child's attention first before you respond
- Come down to the child's eye level
- Smile, make eye contact and use the child's name
- Use simple, clear language appropriate to their age and development level
- Use friendly, non-threatening and open body language
- Show them that you like them and that you enjoy talking to them
- Use a gentle and appropriate tone of voice
- Use positive words and phrases, such as 'do this' rather than 'do not do that'
- Actively listen and carefully consider your responses
- Allow the child time to express themselves
- Acknowledge the child's feelings

- Be consistent and follow up on their ideas and requests

- Use visual aids, where appropriate, such as pictures and signs

- Ask open-ended questions to find out more and to sustain the conversation

- Role model positive and appropriate behaviour, such as active listening, using manners, and taking turns

Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Programs refer to the planned activities for children. This may include their daily routines and transitions.

2. Practices that resulted in negative outcomes need to be updated or changed completely.

3. Responsive means that you are active and responds quickly.

4. Being respectful entails active listening, scaffolding, and building a relationship of trust.

Learning Activity for Chapter 5

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the classroom learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

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