

EARLY YEARS POLICY

Early Years Services Educational Programs	Policy No:	QA 1.1
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	Approved By:	Manager Aged and Family
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Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Early Years	
Authorising Officer:	Manager Community Strengthening	

1. Purpose

- To provide an approved framework which informs the development and delivery of high quality early childhood education and development programs for all early years services provided by the Surf Coast Shire Council.
- To ensure that the educational programs enhance the learning and development of each child participating in Surf Coast Shire Council early years services.

2. Scope

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 1.1, 1.2

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 168

Victorian Children's Services: Regulations 2009.

3. Application

All early childhood education and development programs provided by the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services.

4. Definitions

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework - Overview

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework advances all children's learning and development from birth to eight years. It does this by supporting all early childhood professionals to work together and with families to achieve common outcomes for all children.

The Victorian Framework is informed by the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child* advances an image of children as subjects of rights and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationship with others. These principles are consistent with contemporary early childhood research.

Advancing children's learning and development from birth to eight years

Children learn from birth and their learning and development at each stage of life forms the foundation for the next. During the period from birth to eight years, children experience more rapid brain development and acquire more skills and knowledge than in any other period in their lives.

By the time they enter school, children have already developed key communication, learning and thinking skills; learned to build and maintain relationships; and formed a strong sense of their own identity. These skills and knowledge are the foundation for learning at school, and for lifelong learning.

The Victorian Early Years Framework sets the highest expectations for every child

It identifies five early years learning and development outcomes for all children:

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

The Victorian Framework describes each of these Outcomes for children from birth to eight years, linking the learning outcomes from the *Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia to the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Levels 1 and 2*. The Outcomes provide a shared language for all early childhood professionals and families to use when planning for children's learning and development.

The Victorian Framework identifies eight practice principles for learning and development, which describes the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to facilitate learning and development. These principles are based on the pedagogy of the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* and the P–12 Principles of Learning and Teaching, and on the latest international evidence about the best ways to support children's learning. In addition, the Victorian Framework emphasises the importance of supporting children's and families' transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan

Marrung Educational Plan 2016-2026 was developed to improve the knowledge of our First Nations people and decrease the gap and increase the educational outcomes of Aboriginal children within Victoria's universal services.

"Victoria will be a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victoria's; where our universal services systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity".

Positive climate for learning and development

- Koorie children and learners of all ages are strong in their identity within all services.
- All Victoria understand and respect Koorie culture and history.
- Community engagement in learning and development Services and Koorie communities work together on local, place based approaches to improving learning outcomes.

A culture of professional leadership

- Success for Koorie Victorians is core business for all educational leaders

Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Development – Early Years

- Young Koorie children are on track in their health, development and wellbeing.
- The early learning experience for Koorie children sets them up for life.

Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Overview

The Council of Australian Governments developed this Framework to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. In this way, the *Early Years Learning Framework* (the Framework) contributes to realising the Council of Australian Governments' vision that:

"All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation."

The framework draws on conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development. The framework forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning. It has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development. The framework has been designed for use by early childhood educators working in partnership with families, children's first and most influential educators. The framework supports Goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians*, that:

All young Australians become:

- *Successful learners*
- *Confident and creative individuals*
- *Active and informed citizens.*

All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life

Fundamental to the framework is a view of children's lives as characterised by *belonging, being and becoming*. From before birth children are connected to family, community, culture and place.

Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's first and most influential educators. As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.

Belong

Experiencing belonging – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence.

Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighborhood and a wider community. Belonging acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.

Being

Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world. To recognise the significance of the 'here and now' in children's lives. It is about the present and them knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities, and meeting challenges in everyday life. The early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also about the present.

Becoming

Children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. They are shaped by many different events and circumstances. Becoming reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow. It emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

The framework conveys the highest expectations for all children's learning from birth to five years and through the transitions to school. It communicates these expectations through five Learning Outcomes and provides broad direction for early childhood educators in early childhood settings to facilitate children's learning.

Children's Learning

The diversity in family life means that children experience belonging, being and becoming in many different ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning. Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated.

Play is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

Children actively construct their own understandings and contribute to others' learning. They recognise their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning, and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them, including their learning. Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities.

Educators' practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children's learning. Children's early learning influences their life chances. Wellbeing and a strong sense of connection, optimism and engagement enable children to develop a positive attitude to learning. The Learning Outcomes section of the framework provides examples of evidence of children's learning.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 require that Child Safe Standards are understood and embedded across all Council services and programs. Standard 7 Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children; provides a framework to empower children to understand their rights, to recognize what is abuse is, to understand any form of abuse is not acceptable and how they can take action to report abuse when they see or experience it.

5. Policy

Each service within Surf Coast Shire Council early years services has a Statement of Philosophy in place, which guides all aspects of that service's operations and in particular the delivery of the educational programs.

5.1 Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Educational Programs

Based on (as applicable) the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, the Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Child Safe Standards and Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, Surf Coast Shire Council early years services develop and deliver educational programs where:

- Curriculum decision-making maximises each child's learning and development opportunities.
- Critical reflection and questioning of teaching practice occurs to maximise the child's participation and voice within the program.
 - How do we as educators empower the child participation and voice?
 - How do we build a child's self-esteem?
 - How do we develop a child's understanding of collaboration and their rights?

How do we ensure that the child's voice is heard within our programs and organisation?

- Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are consistently incorporated and actively drive all aspects of the program.
- The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise each child's involvement and engagement in learning.
- Every child is actively and consistently supported to engage in the program.
- Each child's identity and independence is consistently considered and promoted, enabling them to make a range of choices and decisions to influence events in their world.
- Assessment of each child's learning and development is part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation. It is an interactive process that drives development of the program.
- Staff / educators consistently respond to children's ideas and play and intentional teaching is embedded within the program to scaffold and extend each child's learning.
- Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is consistently used to implement, review and revise the program.
- The documentation about each child's program and progress is available in an accessible format and opportunities are provided for discussion with families.
- All children's individual documentation is to remain confidential however can be viewed by staff / educators, families and specialists if required, with parent / guardian permission.

5.2 Development of educational programs

The range of Surf Coast Shire early years services develop educational programs utilising a range of tools and templates applicable to the specific area within the early years services, consistent with the required frameworks.

Observations:

Staff / educators implement a range of observation methods to identify children's individual needs, abilities and interests in both an individual and group setting. This can then be used for reflections within their individual development profile and to inform the planning of their program for individual and groups of children. Some of these methods may consist of:

- Journal entries
- Photography / Works Samples
- Parental / Guardian / Family input
- Reports.

Children's Profiles:

A learning outcome for individual children and groups is devised through formulating specific individual and framework objectives. In addition strategies and planned activities are linked to the approved learning framework then evaluated for future learning.

5.3 Informing parents and families about the educational programs

Information about the educational program being implemented is available at the service whether paper bases or electronically for ease of access to families. Information is regularly placed in educational programs newsletters informing families of the current objectives and research.

In Family Day Care (FDC) the program is to be available at each FDC residence.

The following information is to be given to a child's parents / guardians when requested:

- the content and operation of the educational program as it relates to that child.
- information about that child's participation in the program.
- in programs where applicable, a copy of assessments and evaluations in relation to that child.

5.4 Adequate Sleep and Rest

The implementation of safe sleep, rest and relaxation practices that meet the individual developmental and learning needs of each child in the service, is an important part of the development of the educational program. Refer to the *Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Sleep, Rest & Relaxation Policy & Procedure*.

6. Records

Records shall be retained for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention/Disposal Responsibility	Retention Period	Location
Educational Plan	Records	Two years	Active: onsite Inactive: archived
Early Years Enrolment & Consent Form	Records	Until the child turns 25 years	Active: onsite Inactive: archived
All about me forms	Records	Until the child turns 25 years	Active: onsite Inactive: archived

7. Attachments

Not applicable

8. References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D14/28676	Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D14/70690	Early Years Sleep, Rest and Relaxation Policy
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy
MPP-052	Child Safe Organisation Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D14/28442	Family Day Care 'Active Play' Work Instructions
D14/95703	Early Years Enrolment & Consent Form
D15/117400	Family Day Care All about me Form
D15/77461	Occasional Care All about me Form
D14/28918	Service Improvement Plans/Quality Improvement Plans

Other References

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, 2011 amended 2016
Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009.
My Time Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia, 2011.
Education and Care Services National Law 2011
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2010.
National Quality Standard, 2011.
Victorian Children’s Services Regulations 2009
Early Years Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – National Quality Framework Policy
Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026

Approval Date:	01/04/2014	Approved by:	General Manager Culture and Community
Amendment/Review 1:	01/05/2015	Approved by:	Manager Aged and Family
Amendment/Review 2:	24/04/2018	Approved by:	Manager Aged and Family
Amendment/Review 3:	10/10/2019	Approved by:	Manager Community Strengthening
