

Early Years Services – QA1.1 Educational Programs

TRIM Reference: D14/70701 Due for Review: 4 January 2027
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to embedding approved learning frameworks in all early years programs to ensure the delivery of high-quality education and care. Our Early Years Services educators and management are dedicated to creating programs that support each child's individual learning and development, fostering positive outcomes for all children in our care.

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: Quality Area 1
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 155, 156, 168
Victorian Children's Services: Regulations 2020.

Scope

This policy applies to all early childhood education and care programs provided by the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Services.

Policy

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

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, Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool, Child Safe Standards, 8 Aboriginal ways of learning 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 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 transitions and routines, maximises 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 are 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 intentional teaching is embedded within the program to scaffold and extend each child's learning to promotes children's agency.

- Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is consistently used to implement, review and revise the program.
- Documentation is recorded on each child 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 this can be viewed by staff / educators, families and specialists if required, with parent / guardian permission.

Development of educational programs

Surf Coast Shire early years services develop educational programs utilising a range of tools and templates applicable to the specific service that is, consistent with the required frameworks and planning cycle sequence

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
- Jottings
- Videos/Photography/Works Samples
- Parental/Guardian/Family input
- Reports
- Learning stories
- Children's artwork and markings
- Critical reflective discussions between staff, children, families and specialists

Children's Profiles:

Learning outcomes for individual children and groups are devised through formulating goals and specific objectives that reflect the approved learning frameworks and practice principles. Further strategies and planned activities are then formulated and linked to approved learning frameworks, evaluate and guide the direction of each individual child's future learning.

Informing parents and families about the educational programs:

Information about the educational program being implemented is available at the service for families to access.

Kindergarten - Information is regularly discussed between families and staff. Program, practice and children's individual information is available on Kinderloop informing families of the current objectives and research.

Occasional Care - Information is communicated to families using Xplor and emails.

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.
- a copy of assessments, reports and evaluations in relation to that child.

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*.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Using AI for everyday practice

AI can be used to support practice without sacrificing professional autonomy or the genuine relationships educators build everyday with children and families.

While AI can be a valuable tool for tasks such as translating a story or refining an observation, it should never replace the core professional responsibilities of an educator.

The foundation of effective pedagogy remains an educator's ability to draw upon research, deep content knowledge, and evidence-based practices. After all, it is through nuanced observation and thoughtful reflection that an educator truly gains a profound understanding of a child's unique identity and learning journey.

Warnings and considerations when using AI:

- AI can make up information, so always fact-check.
- AI may reflect bias from its training data.
- AI can miss important context or nuance.
- Entering sensitive data into AI can risk privacy.
- You are responsible for the final output, not the AI.
- You must not upload photos of children.

While AI can be a big time-saver, continuous critical reflection is paramount. While an AI model might write a piece of documentation, it is important to question: "Is that accurate? Is that fair? Is that appropriate? An educator's role is not to simply accept AI output but to use it as a starting point."

Fact-checking is imperative because AI systems are known to 'hallucinate' or produce inaccurate, nonsensical or false results, despite presenting them in a plausible way.

Bias is another key concern as AI systems may have been trained on wrongful information and may perpetuate and amplify stereotypes or lead to discrimination. This is particularly worrying for children and families experiencing vulnerability, who are more susceptible to discrimination, or simply may not be considered in planning, due to algorithmic bias if they are not properly represented in datasets.

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. The Framework supports all early childhood professionals to work together 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.

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 understands 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.

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.

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.

In 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.

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 3 –

- Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including safety, information and participation.
- The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated
- Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

8 Aboriginal ways of learning

A pedagogy framework that allows teachers to include Aboriginal perspectives by using Aboriginal learning techniques – derived from research involving DE, James Cook University and Western New South Wales Regional Aboriginal Education Team between 2007 and 2009.

8 ways

Story Sharing – Approaching learning through narrative.

Learning Maps – Explicitly mapping/visualising processes.

Non-verbal – Applying intra-personal and kinaesthetic skills to thinking and learning.

Symbols and Images – Using images and metaphors to understand concepts and content.

Land Links – Place-based learning, linking content to local land and place.

Non-linear – Producing innovations and understanding by thinking laterally or combining systems.

Deconstruct/Reconstruct – Modelling and scaffolding, working from wholes to parts (watch then do).

Community Links – Centring local viewpoints, applying learning for community benefit.

Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool

- The EYALT empowers kindergarten teaching teams to provide information on where a child is at in their learning and evidence based intentional teaching strategies linked to that point of learning for programming through teaching teams observations.
- EYALT contains 8 assessment modules that align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework outcomes.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D15/16286	Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy
D15/35312	Early Years Providing a 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

D15/77461	Occasional Care All About Me Form	
D14/28918	Work Instructions - Service Improvement Plans/Quality Improvement Plans	
D24/136792	Work Instruction – Campfire – All Surf Coast Shire Operated Kindergartens and Pre-schools	
D25/142472	Work Instruction – Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)	
D25/141713	Work Instruction – School Readiness Funding (SRF)	
D25/141710	Work Instruction – Kindergarten RepsD25/137590	Work Instruction – Early Years Research projects
D25/141711	Work Instruction – Professional Development (PD) Days	
D25/141712	Work Instruction – Kindergarten RAP Management	
D25/141709	Work Instruction – Staff Development 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 2020
 Early Years Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – National Quality Framework Policy
 Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026
 8 Aboriginal ways of learning 2007-2009
 Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool 2024
 Commission for Children and Young People

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	General Manager Culture & Community – 1 April 2014
2	Amendment/Review	Manger Aged and Family - 1 May 2015
3	Amendment/Review	Manger Aged and Family - 24 April 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manger Aged and Family - 10 October 2019
5	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 16 February 2021
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 28 July 2022
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8	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 4 July 2025
9	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 23 October 2025