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Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A Creating a valuable learning environment
- 1B Evaluating and modifying the learning environment

Developing appropriate settings and environments

When setting up an experience or activity, it is vital that you do so in a way that invites children to engage with the learning environment. The learning environment needs to be clean, well-organised and appropriately resourced. It should also be inviting and aesthetically pleasing.

You also need to cater for the child's desire to participate. This is achieved by providing opportunities that relate to the interests of all children.

Indoor and outdoor environments should offer children opportunities to explore, develop and grow while working with or alongside other children and educators.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality	y Standard			
✓	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	n			
✓	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships	with families and communities			
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadershi	0			
Ear	ly Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place			
	Principl	es			
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relations	ships			
	Partnerships				
✓	High expectations and equity				
✓	Respect for diversity				
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice				
	Practic	e			
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches			
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children			
	Learning through play Learning through play				
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality			
✓	Learning environments	Environments			
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence			
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions			
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning			
Outcomes					
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity				
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world				
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing				
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing				
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing Children are confident and involved learned				

Many children may also find relief in the outdoor environment if they are overwhelmed by larger groups of children, or the noise and sensory stimulation of the indoor environment.

Creating valuable learning opportunities

The resources and materials you provide as well as children's interests and abilities will affect how they interact with different areas in the learning environment.

When creating opportunities to learn, you need to consider the framework learning outcomes and the different aspects of a child's development. You also need to consider how you can provide opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning.

Your curriculum should be based around the EYLF and/or MTOP goals and outcomes. By including as

many of these areas as possible, you will develop a fulfilling and balanced program of experiences.

As well as the EYLF/MTOP goals and outcomes, learning should be based on the following aspects of a child's development:

- physical development
- social, emotional and moral development
- intellectual development
- spiritual and creative development.

Watch this video about children's development.

EYLF/MTOP goals

The following outlines the goals of the EYLF/MTOP.

Belonging

Children knowing where and with whom they belong.

Being

Children living in the moment and being valued for what they are currently doing and learning.

Becoming

Children changing from who they are now to a new self that participates fully.



Physical development

During the first few years of life, children's fine and gross motor skills increase rapidly. At each stage of development, a child first masters a movement, then elaborates on it and practises until satisfied, before moving on to learn something new.

Play allows children to consolidate skills they have already mastered, as well as enabling them to use their bodies in many new and challenging ways, such as climbing, standing, stretching, grasping and hopping.



Physical activities help children to:

- develop strength and stamina
- release excess energy
- learn hand-eye coordination
- develop balance.

Social, emotional and moral development

Children learn many social skills through play. They encounter situations where they learn to collaborate with others, make choices and decisions, and experience failure and success.

Pretend play assists children to explore the world of feelings and relationships. By playing out situations collaboratively with others, children can come to terms with their world.

Emotionally, children's growth is also fostered through play as they learn to manage a variety of feelings.

Morally, children learn through play about right and wrong – how to treat others fairly and what it feels like to be treated unfairly. They also learn about their community, conservation and the environment as they share stories with others.

Some social skills you may see children practising during play include:

- taking turns
- sharing
- negotiating
- cooperating and collaborating
- thinking
- setting rules and guidelines.

Activity	Discussion ideas	Project ideas			
Find out about sustainability topics	 Recycling Reusing Reducing water and electricity use Reducing waste 	 Develop a recycling system, worm farm or compost heap. Find ways to reuse items in the service creatively. Implement reduction plans. Have a rainwater tank installed and monitor rainfall and water level. 			

Encouraging creative play and learning through nature

The diversity you find in nature provides children with many experiences of colour, texture, size and shape. Children of all ages can benefit from the use of natural materials in play. These materials enable children to begin to understand and appreciate the world of living things.

You can develop a collection of natural materials that children can use by sourcing them from second-hand shops or asking families to donate them.



Practice task 1

1.	List three ideas to include the natural environment in your learning environment that you could implement immediately.		
2.	Ask another educator for an idea they have for including the natural environment in the learning environment and record it here.		

Effective evaluation can identify a need for modification. Try evaluating the learning environment and the experiences children are involved in by looking at why modification may be required.

Reason for modification	Examples
To support all aspects of children's learning	 New ideas emerge The learning experience is too challenging The learning experience is not challenging enough The children have explored this concept and are ready to learn something new More natural or open-ended resources are required
To promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning	 More or less children want to be involved More or less space is required There are distractions, so you need to move to another area The discussion evolves into a larger learning concept You need to use more open questions
To ensure that families and the community are respected	 Involvement is not suitable at present Families express a certain wish about the service Changes in the family influence the plans You learn something new about a family
To enhance opportunities for children's learning from other educators, children and their families	 Timetables need to be more flexible Inadequate communication or involvement is noted
To foster children's development	 Monitoring is not provided Monitoring takes too wide a focus The EYLF/MTOP is not properly represented

Initiating modification

Children can initiate modifications to the play environment by:

- being allowed to direct their own play and leisure experiences with peers
- initiating experiences
- sharing observations and ideas with you.

You should respond to observations you make and adjust the environment accordingly. This includes providing for individual children's interests and responding to the group's actions in the environment. You should also provide planned and unplanned teaching throughout the day.



2.	A group of children are playing outdoors when they find a flat soccer ball. They try to play with it, but it is too difficult to kick.				
	a. What modification could you make to the environment?				
	b. Which element of the NQS supports your modification?				
3.	You have set up a science table with a magnifying glass and slides. You have tried to show the children how they can use the magnifying glass to see the slides close up, but they are not able to understand the concept of size in relation to the slides, or identify the parts that are on the slides. a. What modification could you make to the environment?				
	b. Which element of the NQS supports your modification?				

Summary

- The resources and materials you provide for different types of learning will affect how the child interacts with a learning area. The way they interact is also determined by their interests and abilities.
- Most children have a fascination with the natural environment; interacting with natural materials will help them develop an appreciation for the value and beauty of nature.
- Evaluation and modification of learning environments is about identifying how to increase the learning capacity of the environment.
- A responsive program is one that is constantly evolving. In order to identify how effective the curriculum is, you must assess and evaluate it continually.
- The modifications that you apply to the learning environment will occur as a result of the planning process or through immediate action.
- By including children in planning activities and experiences, you provide opportunities for discussion and can observe their interactions.



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

- 2A Consulting with others about curriculum and learning environments
- 2B Creating curriculum that reflects the service philosophy

Designing and implementing curriculum in consultation with others

Your curriculum and the learning environment should be responsive to children and families, while upholding your service philosophy. When designing and implementing the curriculum you need to ensure it offers opportunities for children and families to contribute their ideas, thoughts and extensions for play. You should also integrate a variety of age- and stage-appropriate opportunities for play and learning.

Consultation with children allows you to find out how they view the curriculum and learning environment. It helps you to understand the reasons why they like doing some activities and not others.

There are many ways to consult with children and gather responses. You might use:

- group or individual discussion and questioning
- spontaneous discussion or suggestions
- anecdotal discussion (sharing stories and experiences).

One-on-one interactions with children offer the opportunity to consult with them on a diverse range of topics. It is an opportunity to learn about and connect with the child as they may disclose more in these interactions than in the larger group setting. It gives the child a chance to identify and communicate their own needs, strengths and goals.

Example

Consulting with a child about the environment

Shaheen, an educator, notices that Nyla sits down at the collage table with two other children but leaves again almost immediately. Shaheen asks, 'Nyla, wouldn't you like to make a collage today?' Nyla says that there is no spare paper to paste onto, the glue brush is sticky on the handle and she can't use the sparkles because the other children have moved all the glitter to their side of the table. Shaheen adjusts the experience and materials, and Nyla returns to the activity.

Consultation topics

To gain information that can be used to reflect on the current program, consult the children about the following factors.

Play preferences	 Where the child prefers to play What play the child is involved in Who the child plays with
Social interactions	The child's peer and adult interactions, including the purpose of their interactions
Communication	 Verbal and nonverbal communication skills and abilities, including who the child communicates with and how effectively they communicate
Language	 How language is used What level the child's receptive and productive language abilities have reached
Participation preferences	 How the child prefers to approach activities – by watching, copying, being shown by an educator or doing immediately
Physical abilities	 The child's fine motor skills The child's gross motor skills Their fundamental skills
Emotional status	 The child's temperament and personality How the child copes with fear, enjoyment, excitement and change
Out-of-character behaviour or events	► How the child is reacting to or coping in the environment

Example

Different planning methods

Educator 1

Kelly, an educator, collects observation records throughout the week. At the start of each week, when she is provided with time for planning, she sets out a schedule for change she wants to introduce throughout the week. It includes plans for:

- experience changes that will occur immediately to meet children's needs
- extension modifications that will occur over the next week
- new experiences that will be implemented when the experiences already on offer require change.

Kelly also refreshes her planning documentation so that it is easy to see all these elements.

Educator 2

Gerda, an educator, likes an emerging response to planning. She usually responds immediately to opportunities in the play environment for extension, and she involves the children in the change. At times she needs to delay these changes until the next day, as she needs to organise new materials. Gerda includes the children in this planning as it heightens their involvement – sometimes they bring in additional and complementary resources. Because Gerda plans with the children, this frees up her dedicated planning time for other aspects of preparation.

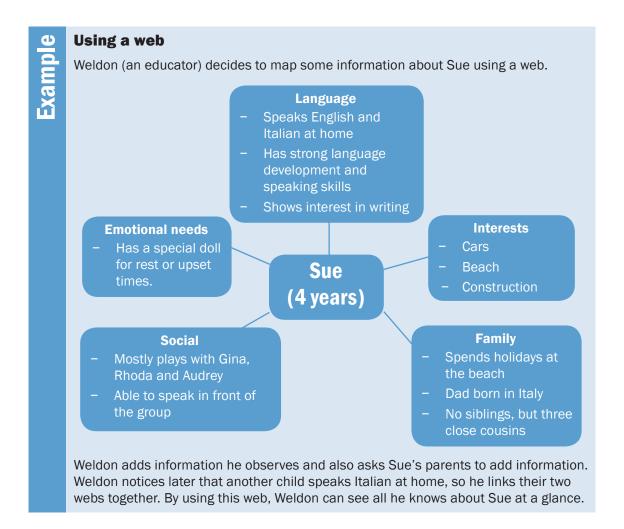
Philosophy of the service

The philosophy of your service is pivotal in designing and implementing a curriculum. The way you put the philosophy into practice is called pedagogy.

The NQF can be used to inform the philosophy of your service and provides the best-practice goals your service should work toward. The components that influence your curriculum are mandated through the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations. These components include the NQS, and the EYLF/MTOP.

The NQS states that a service philosophy should embrace the following principles:

- The rights of the child are paramount.
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners.
- Equity, inclusion and diversity are upheld.
- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.
- The role of parents and families is respected and supported.
- ▶ There are high expectations for children, educators and service providers.



Time samples

Time samples record observations taken at specified intervals of time: it may be every five minutes, half hour or at a set time each day. You can use a time sample to record patterns in a specific behaviour, interaction or interest.

Event samples and checklists

Event samples record your observations each time a particular event occurs. Specify which event is important to record and each time this event occurs, add a record of what happens before, during and after the situation. In an event sample you are able to consider the context and duration of the event. An event sample is an excellent tool for recording the behaviour of one or more children.

Sociograms

When it comes to recording children's interactions, sociograms are a useful and simple tool. A sociogram consists of a web-like connection map of who a child interacts with and who interacts with the child. The sociogram may record the interactions that centre around one child, or may record the interactional web that occurs in a group of children. You may use a sociogram to record emerging communication skills, new relationships or changing dynamics in a group.

To develop an objective from the learning framework outcomes you have identified, try the following:

- 1. Link your analysis to a specific EYLF/MTOP outcome or sub-outcome.
- 2. Develop a goal based on what you want the child to learn.
- 3. Develop an objective.

The following table sets out how this might be done.

EYLF outcome	Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners			
EYLF sub-outcome	Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity			
Evidence from outcome	Children express wonder and interest in their environments. Children are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning.			
Goal	For Leo to know more about dinosaurs.			
Objectives	For Leo to learn the names and eating habits of two dinosaurs and recognise the characteristics of each dinosaur. One dinosaur will be a herbivore and the other a carnivore.			

The learning environment

The NQS provides services with guidelines for child education and care. These guidelines offer information for providing responsive learning environments. Quality Area 3 in particular focuses on the physical environment; it ensures it is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

Learning environments must reflect learning framework practice by being holistic, responsive, play-focused, abundant in learning opportunities and culturally competent.

Watch this video about providing a stimulating learning environment.



Holistic

To create a holistic learning environment, you must pay attention to all developmental aspects:

- physical
- social
- emotional

- spiritual
- cognitive
- linguistic.

You must also recognise and respond to connections between children, families, the community and the natural environment.

The learning frameworks have been created to ensure that a holistic approach is achieved. If you aim to have each of the five EYLF/MTOP outcomes represented in your plan of experiences, with as many specific outcomes as possible, you will be designing a holistic program.

You could use a checklist to ensure you are successful in this area. Another option is to use a planning format that represents the EYLF/MTOP outcomes.

Another perspective	Seek another person's opinion. Ask a colleague or parent who observed the activity. If the activity was recorded, ask a supervisor or mentor to watch the video. Find out their thoughts on the value of the experience and how you provided it, how you might improve this experience and whether they thought the experience was suitable.
Children's ideas	Ask children questions about the activity and their investigations. Use open-ended questions and active listening techniques, and encourage problem-solving.
New ideas and activities of high interest	Did the children's interest and enthusiasm coincide with your expectations, or were you surprised? Consider how you can include the children's choices and ideas in experiences that relate to EYLF/MTOP outcomes.
Principles and practices of the learning framework	Consider whether the experience related to the EYLF/MTOP as you originally planned. Were you able to implement your philosophy and pedagogy? What did you learn about teaching practice that you can apply to the next experience?

Documenting monitoring and assessment

Many educators will include space for monitoring and assessing experiences on their planning format or template. This keeps the information together and also represents how an experience evolves from planning through implementation to assessment.

The following are two different ways to record a learning experience: one through a web plan, the other using the learning experience record.

13.03.18 Farm animals in sand tray

Outcome 4: Dispositions for learning such as curiosity



14.03.18

Monitoring: Children are excited at having the animal play, two places inadequate Modification: Took the animals and materials out to the sandpit

Outcome 4: Dispositions for learning such as curiosity

Outcome 2: Children develop a sense of belonging to groups



17.03.18

Monitoring: Gordon asked if he could put the zoo animals out into the sand Modification: Zoo animals added to sandpit with farm animals New objective: What is the difference between zoo animals and farm animals?

Outcome 4: Dispositions for learning such as curiosity

Outcome 2: Children develop a sense of belonging to groups

Providing choice

Providing choice means offering a variety of experiences or spaces in the room that allow each child to comfortably participate in and switch between them. This is an important consideration, as without a variety of experiences children will be waiting or involved in activities that don't interest them, which may lead to difficult behaviour.

Apart from variety and capacity, it's also important that activities cater for children's individual interests and strengths.



By considering the interests and strengths of the children in the group, as well as the culture and lifestyle of their families, you will discover a wide range of possibilities.

Older children are able to provide their own ideas for activities and experiences. They may answer questions you ask, participate in brainstorming with a group or take responsibility for collecting ideas from other children.

xample

Providing choices that cater to children's interests

The following activities are set up after lunch:

- pasting
- drawing with crayons
- block play
- book corner
- water play.

Helena is interested in active play; there are no choices for her.

Ewan is interested in creative activities: he has four choices.

Scott is interested in dramatic play; he has one choice.

Practice task 9

1.	Describe how a learning environment can be set up attractively.
2.	Describe how a physical learning environment can be set up with aesthetics, choice and the children's interests in mind.

Ensuring sustained interactions

Sustained interactions are those where children interact with you to share ideas and elaborate on interests.

Interactions can be sustained when you:

- gather information
- invite participation
- support participation
- extend learning and/or play
- give feedback and support.

To facilitate these sustained interactions you need to listen to and seek clarification of the child's ideas and thoughts. Positive questioning and feedback can be used to achieve this; for example:

- 'I don't know what do you think?'
- 'That's an interesting idea!'
- 'I like what you have done there.'
- 'Have you seen what Alex has done?'
- 'I wondered why you had that.'
- 'I've never thought about that before.'
- 'What would happen if we did this?'

To maintain dialogue with the child, you may respond to their replies by expressing your ideas through statements such as:

- 'I think ...'
- 'I agree, but also ...'
- 'I imagine ...'
- 'I disagree because ...'

- 'I like ...'
- 'I don't like ...'

- 'I wonder if ...'

Children are more likely to become engaged in discussions that are based on their interests and strengths. They are also more likely to maintain a sense of agency when they have participated in developing the plan of activities and when they are inspired to be curious. Curiosity is about finding things out and experimenting. When initiating a new activity or experience, children's curiosity is excellent and may encourage participation.

Enabling learning dispositions

Learning dispositions are the characteristics that help you to learn. Your interactions and plans provide for and promote learning dispositions in children.

A learning disposition can be described as an attitude or tendency that influences the way a child participates and uses learning strategies. They are linked to feelings and views, and can influence self-image and self-esteem.

<u>e</u>	Checklist						
Example	Skill			Achieved		Needs improvement	
ш	I treat all families with respect]
	I have a knowledge of each family that I care for and educate]
	I represent a range of cultures in the environment I am responsible for]
		Monday	V. Booth		Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	I have completed my reflection journal		~	,		✓	✓
	I have achieved a goal		Attend training behave plans	ded ng on viour			

Linking to outcomes

When you monitor and reflect on children's learning, you need to do this in a way that shows a clear link to your program and the EYLF/MTOP outcomes. You need to be able to evaluate what you have planned and implemented for individuals and groups of children. You will want to know whether the objective has been met or if more time or support is needed.

Your monitoring of and reflection on children's learning will enable you to identify the experiences you need to adapt or redesign in order to continue to address the children's development and interests.

Ensure continuous refinement

You will implement experiences daily that need to be monitored and reflected on to ensure they continue to meet children's interests, engage them and stimulate their learning. You also need to nurture each child to feel a sense of value and belonging. To ensure these things occur, you will be required to continuously refine the curriculum by:

- addressing children's new and evolving skills, strengths, abilities, needs and ideas
- adding and taking away resources, materials and props
- interacting in ways that support the children at the time
- providing routines and timetables that are predictable, flexible and evolving in response to the needs of growing and developing children.

5A

Evaluating teaching

By involving relevant people in your daily work tasks and activities, you can make your curriculum richer and more dynamic as discussions generate fresh ideas for activities and experiences. You will also feel supported as others offer their ideas, participate in preparation and implementation, and contribute to evaluations.

When you collaborate with others in this way you are including their perspective, knowledge and skills to support your direction.



Gathering feedback from children

Once implementation commences, evaluation also commences. Planned and unplanned experiences will be assessed and evaluated, then adapted according to the children's responses and the conditions of the day. Evaluation is not only about reviewing the result; it also includes ongoing review of experiences. This review should include gathering feedback from children.

Children feel belonging as well as ownership when they are involved in decisions relating to activities and experiences. You can discuss ways to change activities to suit a child's needs or interests or use their opinions to encourage others to participate.

If children are to continue to share their feedback, you must take heed of what they tell you. The feedback might indicate that they are keen to continue or extend an activity, that they need support, or that they are under- or over-challenged. When you receive this type of information, you can document it in the formats that are regularly used for collecting information about children, such as learning stories, anecdotal records and jottings.

Older children will be able to provide their own ideas for planned and unplanned activities and experiences. They may answer questions you ask, participate in brainstorming with a group or take responsibility for collecting ideas from other children using graffiti sheets or questionnaires. Every program must respond to spontaneous interests that arise. This means more than just a quick word of acknowledgment. It means taking the interest to the depth of challenge and consideration that the child indicates they would like.

Gathering feedback from families

NQS Standards 6.1 and 6.2 respond to the need for services to work alongside families. Furthermore, Element 1.3.3 is focused on making documentation about each child's program and progress available to families. The guidance to this Element includes expectations that you will:

- exchange information about the program with families
- show them meaningful documentation
- develop methods for making information available
- communicate regularly
- make arrangements to exchange information at mutually convenient times
- use methods of recording that are understood by parents, and are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.

5 B Evaluating the curriculum

Evaluation is how you identify whether your program is relevant and meets the needs of children, families and the service. Assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences needs to be undertaken regularly and according to your service guidelines.

Evaluation questions

Once an experience has been implemented and you have gathered evidence and information on how it went, your overall evaluation of the

curriculum, the experience, setting and environment can take place.



When evaluating the overall effectiveness of the curriculum and learning experiences, ask yourself the following questions.

What worked? What didn't work?

Identify which activities are successful with different children and groups. Note whether there are any factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the experience, such as:

- children's needs
- the sequence of activities
- the resources or materials (including staff)
- the time allocated
- the available space
- aesthetics: the presentation of the materials and space.

Who did and did not participate?

By noting who did and didn't participate in experiences, you are gaining important information about the interests, strengths and needs of children. By recording this information you can monitor each child's or group's level of interest. Ensure that the children that you have planned experiences for are actually participating in them and are meeting the set objectives.

Was the experience ageappropriate? What can you extend on?

Evaluate whether the objectives you set were achieved, whether the children enjoyed the experience and whether the level of participation was as you predicted. Think about ways to extend the experience if children enjoyed it.

Learning checkpoint 5

Assessing and evaluating teaching and learning

1.	According to a service's standards, policies, procedures and guidelines, what time line requirements are expected in relation to assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and learning experiences? Make a list of when each stage should be completed.
2.	Evaluate each of the five experiences you implemented in Learning checkpoint 4. Write a summary of the following information about each experience: the number of days or sessions the experience was provided for spontaneous interests that arose during the experience learning that was observed new ideas and activities of high interest that arose and were acted on extensions, changes or modifications that were made changes or additions in relation to the way the EYLF outcomes, principles or practices were linked to the experience over the time of its implementation changes to the objectives over the time of its implementation what worked and what didn't work.
•	