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## BELONGING, BEING, BECOMING: THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

To assist services become familiar the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) the ACT PSC will be offering a range of strategies to support children's services.

### EYLF Information Sessions

The initial information sessions has the intention to inform and build confidence and understanding. Information sessions will be held late 2009 and early 2010. These sessions will give an overview of the National Quality Agenda – including background and context. Opportunities for reflection and round table discussions will also take place.

### Team Meeting Packages

This package, containing PowerPoint presentation, guided experiences and reflective questions is designed to assist children's services in reflecting on the Early Years Learning Framework. Team meeting packages will be sent out to all ACT children's services early in 2010.

### EYLF Learning Circles (Action Research Project)

This provides a more in depth approach to the implementation of the framework:

Topics to be covered include:

- What the framework is and what future supports will be available
- Unpacking 'Belonging, Being and Becoming'
- The three interrelated elements – Practice, principles and learning outcomes
- How to use the document in different programs
- Families and the EYLF
- EYLF and: Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

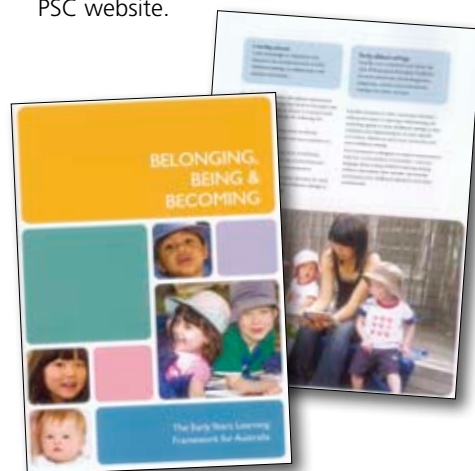
This action research project will provide learners with the opportunity to:

- Develop their own strategy to implement the Framework, taking their own unique circumstances into consideration
- Link current practice to this new document

- Outline the expectations that the framework highlights
- Analyse the practices outlined
- Look at ways to use the learning outcomes
- Explore ways to program, observe and document children's learning with support of the EYLF

### Newsletter Articles/ Website information/ Factsheets

The ACT PSC will provide further information and updates through newsletters, factsheets and the ACT PSC website.



## TRIALLING THE DRAFT EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK: OUR EXPERIENCE

*Sarah White and Evelyn Callaghan – Deakin School for Early Learning*

### Why did you decide to participate in the trial?

A number of staff and directors attended one of the consultation forums and as a result we were interested in knowing more about this proposed National Framework. We felt that taking part in the trial would provide us with this opportunity.

### How did the staff find implementing the Early Years Learning Framework?

Given that the trial period was quite short we were not aiming to implement the EYLF as such, rather to become familiar with the document and find what parts were compatible with our own practice and what parts if any, did we need to embrace as new or different thinking.

### How did the Early Years Learning Framework help the service engage with families?

The period of time allocated for the trial meant that we made decisions around how we would work with the document. We decided that senior staff and management would engage directly with the document during the trial and that we would not at this stage involve families in any formal manner. While assistant staff were aware of the document and that we were trialling it, they were not expected to study it in depth or to necessarily make any changes to their practices.

Taking this approach allowed us to concentrate our efforts in a small group (7 people) situation and to better manage the process over such a short period.



### **What practical changes did your staff make to their everyday practice to implement the Early Years Learning Framework?**

The document was distributed to senior staff and a meeting was arranged for a few days later. Subsequently we held weekly meetings over the trial period. During the first two meetings we worked through the document as a group, becoming familiar with the language, ideas and generally discussed how best to approach the task. All members of the group continued this process between meetings.

At the third meeting we began to look at how the descriptors in the document fitted within our philosophy and practice. Discussions centred around examples from each staff member where there was evidence that directly linked what was in the document with our values and where elements of the document were visible in our day to day practice.

The next step was to identify descriptors in the document that each staff member would actually aim to “teach” to. By doing this we wanted to investigate how to adapt the framework to our particular setting. Documentation of this process was brought back to the meeting from each group of children and discussions centred around the variety of ways to interpret the descriptors and outcomes so as to be compatible with our practices.

As this was a trial process, we did not work on making changes rather on building our understanding, awareness and knowledge around Belonging, Being and Becoming as a new and very exciting development in early years education and care.

### **What do you think the sector will gain from having the Early Years Learning Framework?**

This framework provides an opportunity for services and individuals to reflect on their practice, to share a common language around the work that we do and to be part of a National Learning Framework that is visionary rather than prescriptive.

### **Did the service have any concerns whilst trialling the Early Years Learning Framework?**

We found the process was inspiring and provided a real focus for our thinking. To embed this framework into a well established philosophy will require commitment and dedication with time for discussion, reflection and challenge.

Following the trial we were invited to take part in a two day research network meeting at Charles Sturt University. Here we heard from consortium members, trial participants, Government Representatives from around Australia and organisations charged with the task of providing training and support in the roll out of this framework. This was an invaluable opportunity to hear about the many initiatives that are being explored across the country in an effort to make the Early Years Learning Framework accessible, understood and embraced by all those working with young children.

## **SCHOOL AGE CARE – A NATIONAL UPDATE**

### **A National Voice for Out of School Hours Care.**

**Robyn Munro Miller**  
*(NSW NOSHSA representative)*

Delegates from every state and territory peak OSHC association in Australia met on 29–30 October in Adelaide for National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA) meeting.

The meeting was an outstanding success, which resulted in national agreement being gained on the need for a middle years framework that builds on the current Early Years Learning Framework “Belonging, Being and Becoming”. A working party has been formed to commence work around the middle years framework. In addition NOSHSA delegates also prepared and submitted a response to the “Schools in the 21st Century” Senate Inquiry and formed a working group on award modernisation.

The Australian and State/Territory Governments commenced working in early 2009 to seek agreement on set standards around ratios and qualifications for the early childhood sector. To date OSHC has not been included in such discussion but nationally agree that the OSHC sector should be included. As a proactive response, the NOSHSA delegation commenced working towards agreement on our own standards in order to present them to Government as an agreed position. It was unanimously agreed that in working towards an agreed National standard no state or territory would lose their current standard of ratios if it was higher than the proposed national standard.

A highlight of the meeting was a delegation to meet the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth, Kate Ellis, in her Adelaide office. The delegation raised issues around the inclusion of children in a national framework for quality service provision, the relationship between schools and OSHC services and the need for agreed national standards in ratio and qualifications for the sector. The meeting was positive with the Minister being receptive to the concerns expressed. It was also an excellent opportunity to showcase the unified voice of the Australian OSHC sector.

For further information about NOSHSA go to [www.noshsa.org.au](http://www.noshsa.org.au).

# FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS: A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CHILDCARE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NCAC)

NCAC is committed to responding to the needs of the child care profession. We believe in working with services so that they can achieve the best results possible as they progress through the Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) process. This helps to ensure that child care professionals are informed and supported to reflect on, evaluate and continually improve their practices so that children and families are provided with quality experiences and outcomes.

In light of the feedback from NCAC's *Validation Evaluation Forms* and the recommendations in the Productivity Commission's *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business*, NCAC has reviewed CCQA processes. All services registered with NCAC should have received a letter in October 2009 advising that the *Validation Survey for Families* has ceased being distributed. This survey will no longer form part of the service's Accreditation Decision as the weighting for the *Validation Survey for Families* will be transferred to the service's *Self-study Report*<sup>1</sup>.

NCAC reminds services that the involvement of families is a two-way process and vital to the success of continuing improvement. Families are the experts on their children and the first point of contact when child care professionals are seeking information about children's routines, development and interests. Similarly, parents seek the expertise of staff and carers when they need advice on a range of issues such as how to implement behaviour guidance strategies or what to do when moving children from child care to school.

<sup>1</sup> *Validation Surveys* for directors, staff, carers and school age children are still required and will contribute to the Accreditation Decision.

When services provide opportunities for families to be involved it helps to build open, honest and trusting partnerships. This in turn encourages families to provide feedback about the service's practice because they feel confident that child care professionals will listen to their ideas, and respect their values and opinions.

Promoting family involvement is therefore incredibly important. To reinforce this, there are several Principles in the *Quality Practices Guides* that refer to the partnership and interactions between families and child care professionals.

## Ways to keep families involved

To effectively involve families in CCQA means recognising that there are varying degrees to which families can commit to participating in the self-study and continuing improvement process. Some parents may be able to attend every family or management meeting, while others may prefer to know what is happening by reading the service's newsletter. This means that a range of approaches need to be used to inform families about CCQA, as well as providing opportunities for them to provide feedback and share ideas.

The following resources may help services to keep families informed about CCQA.

## Information packs

Produce an information pack for families to receive at enrolment which outlines how they can be involved in CCQA and why their feedback and participation is important.

## The NCAC website ([www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au))

Encourage families to access the 'Families and Children' webpage on NCAC's website which includes information about:

- Finding, choosing and using child care
- Accessing the *Family Factsheets*
- Ordering the free *Family Information Kit*

## Family Factsheets

These factsheets are written for families and can help services to communicate information about quality child care practices. This may be a good starting point for child care professionals when they are thinking of ways to inform families about what quality practice should look like. *Family Factsheets* can be downloaded and printed from the NCAC website, and include:

- Quality child care for babies, toddlers, preschool age and school age children
- The value of play
- Building a partnership with your child care service

## Quality Companions

Services can read the following *Quality Companions* (which can be downloaded from the NCAC website):

- *Encouraging Family Participation* – discusses different strategies that encourage participation.
- *Understanding Child Care Quality Assurance* – introduces families to CCQA and explains why quality child care is important.

## Putting Children First magazine

Services are encouraged to read the following articles from NCAC's *Putting Children First* magazine which can help when building partnerships with families:

- 'Supporting partnerships through family participation' (Issue 28, pp. 14–17) – looks at different ways families can actively participate in the service's operation and practices.
- 'Communicating with new families' (Issue 28, pp. 14–17) – explores the importance of building partnerships with families and a range of strategies to do this effectively.
- 'Supporting partnerships with families through parent committees' (Issue 25, pp. 12–14) – discusses the benefits of parent committees and how to make it advantageous to the service and its practices.

## Other CCQA resources

Use NCAC's resources to communicate to families about quality child care. These resources are available through the NCAC Online Store or by completing a *Publications Order Form* and include:

- Quality Child Care Poster Series – assists in communicating with families about what the service is doing everyday to provide quality outcomes for children. Each Quality Child Care Poster is A3 size and can be framed or laminated for display at the service, or in family day carers' homes. The Poster Series (one set for family day care, long day care or outside school hours care services) contains 14 individual posters.
- *The Pocket Guide for Families* – details the Quality Areas and Principles of each of the CCQA systems, as well as common questions families can ask when choosing or using quality child care.

- *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochure – provides a brief overview of the overarching Principles for each CCQA system, as well as some advice on the role of families in quality child care.

## Ways to gather feedback from families

Families should have opportunities to provide feedback about the service's practices, and share their ideas and opinions. The following strategies can help services to encourage families to participate which can assist in the process of self-study and continuing improvement:

- Asking for participation or feedback during day-to-day conversations with families about how the service is meeting families' needs.
- Including a regular section in the service's newsletter about its progress through CCQA. This might include informing families when a policy or procedure is being reviewed and encouraging them to provide feedback.
- Introducing a suggestion box or having a feedback noticeboard where families can write notes. This is especially useful at the end of the day when there may not be the opportunity to have a one-one-one conversation about the service's practices and families can write their suggestion or questions which can be addressed later.
- Holding regular family information sessions where there are opportunities to provide feedback about the service's progress through CCQA and families can make suggestions or share ideas.

## Online family survey

Services are encouraged to make families aware of NCAC's new *Family Survey*, which is on the NCAC website homepage ([www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)). This survey asks for feedback from

families who are currently using or looking for child care. This feedback is an important factor in providing quality outcomes for children in the future. We also encourage services to write and conduct their own surveys to gauge the effectiveness of their practices, and to consider adjusting their practices according to feedback from families.

For information about the role of families when progressing through CCQA, contact a NCAC Child Care Adviser by telephone on 1300 136 554 or email ([qualitycare@ncac.gov.au](mailto:qualitycare@ncac.gov.au)). Visit the NCAC website ([www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)) to download and print NCAC resources such as *Family Factsheets* and *Quality Companions*.

## Sources and further reading

- Adams, J., & Owens, A. (2008). Supporting partnerships with families through parent committees. *Putting Children First*, 25, 1–14.
- Barnes, H. (2008). Communicating with new families. *Putting Children First*, 28, 14–17.
- National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc. (2009). *Quality companion: Encouraging family participation*. Retrieved 26 October, 2009, from [http://www.ncac.gov.au/quality\\_companions/qc\\_family\\_participation.pdf](http://www.ncac.gov.au/quality_companions/qc_family_participation.pdf)
- National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc. (2009). *Quality companion: Understanding child care quality assurance*. Retrieved 26 October, 2009, from [http://www.ncac.gov.au/quality\\_companions/qc\\_understanding\\_ccqa.pdf](http://www.ncac.gov.au/quality_companions/qc_understanding_ccqa.pdf)
- Stonehouse, A. (2009). Supporting partnerships through family participation. *Putting Children First*, 31, 12–13.

## LEARNING CIRCLES: RESEARCH IN ACTION

### The Importance of “Moments”

*Jenny March – Woden Early Childhood Centre*

I have been employed at Woden Early childhood Centre for the last 14 years. For 13 of those years I have worked with infants and toddlers; an age group which I find constantly delights and challenges me.

I was fortunate to participate in the Action Research group for Babies and Toddlers this year, delivered by ACT PSC and led by Anthony Semann, Wendy Shepherd, Toby Honig and Sheila Degotardi.

From the first day we met as a group I was struck by the wealth of experience and knowledge we shared and as time went on we built relationships with each other. The networking opportunities were invaluable as was the chance for research and reflection leading to changes in our own environments and curriculum. I valued the opportunity to share ideas with other Early Childhood Professionals working with infants and toddlers.

Something that I took away from this opportunity was the importance of “moments”. I have learnt that the program for infants and toddlers is about moments rather than about activities. An example of this is the learning that happens in our room each week when a child brings us a bunch of flowers which both show family appreciation and aid his transition into our care on his first day of his week. We share a routine of getting out the vase, finding a space on the floor and arranging the flowers together. He does most of the arranging as a group of children gather around and we talk about the flowers. Through this moment children are learning the names of flowers, their colours, sizes, scents, as well as concepts such as open and closed, gentle and how to look after them. These flowers are an opportunity for real learning to take place and have been extended on through further planned experiences.

Our toddlers have their own vegetable garden which they tend to with my support. They planted, mulched and watered the garden, resulting in a crop of spinach and broccoli which one toddler told me we needed to eat before it went to flower. This has then led to cooking experiences with our produce, making spinach dip, spinach pizza, cooking broccoli and sharing produce with families to cook at home. Preparing for our summer crops the children will help dig the soil and choose what we should grow. The toddlers are learning through purposeful involvement in something real.

We have made changes in our routines to allow for indoor and outdoor play at the same time with staff in both environments. We respect the children’s choices on where

they want to be. As a result of this change we now see the toddlers as busy and engaged in their play with less need for behaviour guidance. It is very settled.

The children are now involved in their own routines. Toddlers help set the table and make the beds because they want to. By allowing more time for these routines the children are learning life skills and social skills as well as concepts of “enough”, “more” and “ownership”. The toddlers show me clearly that they know what needs to be done.

When changes are made in our environment, we consult the toddlers about what they want to happen. As a result of conversation we have moved the children’s bags within their reach and made small changes in the room with the children moving the furniture with us and playing an active role. We want to empower the toddlers to explore their independence, have a voice and build their own environments. The changes we have made as a team are an investment in our environment which benefits both the children and ourselves, making it a better place to be.

Action Research is an ongoing journey I look forward to sharing with the children in my care.



## ACT PSC MENTORING REVIEW

Earlier this year, the ACT PSC reviewed the mentoring program. The aims of the review were twofold. First, the assessment of the current mentoring program including its strengths and areas for improvement. Second, to develop the program further and make it stronger as we move towards 2010.

A number of key sites that had received mentoring support from the ACT PSC including long day care and out of school hours care programs were visited. The review team interviewed a number of personnel at each site asking specifically about their mentoring experiences, the strengths of the program and any areas for future development. A short survey was also completed by mentoring and non-mentoring participants to gain insight into attitudes towards mentoring in the ACT.

The strengths of the mentoring program were highlighted as:

- The significant knowledge of the mentors
- The support that the mentors provided to the mentees
- Positive changes in practice following support from the mentor
- Networking with other centres

The main areas for suggested improvement from the review are to provide a structured program and more mentors within the ACT.

As a result of the review, the ACT mentoring program will be undergoing some changes. The most significant of these will be the development of a structured approach to mentoring with one-to-one mentoring for employees of children's services in the ACT. The networking peer mentoring groups will continue and will be known as 'peer-to-peer'. As part of this program there will be support and training for mentors and mentees to ensure the program is a continued success. The updated program is currently in development and will commence early 2010.

### Expression of Interest

If you have a passion for excellence in children's services and want to assist in the growth and development of others working with children, then mentoring could be for you!

The ACT PSC is looking for a number of mentors to provide mentoring to aspiring staff working within the children's services sector. In return for your passion and enthusiasm, the ACT PSC will provide training, ongoing support throughout the mentoring program and remuneration. If you're interested in becoming a mentor and helping to shape excellence in children's services in the ACT, send your resume via email to [sarah.riches@commsatwork.org](mailto:sarah.riches@commsatwork.org) or via post to P.O. Box 3955 Weston ACT 2611



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
**CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES AWARDS**

## SAVE THE DAY *ACT Children's Services Awards*

Friday 29 October 2010, 6.30pm – 11.30pm  
Parliament House, Canberra

**Building on the success of the 2008 ACT Children's Services Awards, the ACT PSC is pleased to announce that planning for the 2010 ACT Children's Services Awards is underway.**

The 2008 Awards saw for the first time, the inclusion of all service types representing some 2,400 professionals and volunteers. The event was a perfect opportunity to celebrate individuals for their commitment to the provision of quality care and education for children and their families in the Canberra community. The 2010 Awards hope to **raise the profile of Children's Services in the ACT** with a Gala Awards evening to be held at Parliament House on Friday 29 October 2010.



The inaugural ACT Children's Services Conference "Growing Together 09" was held at Hotel Realm in September 2009 and lived up to the promise that it would be an event that motivated, challenged and inspired delegates.

## Comments from the day:

*Very professional and well organised. Good opportunity to network. Thank you*

*Very interesting & informative. Thank you*

*This was a fantastic opportunity to see the importance of early education. The key note speakers were great. Thank you*

*Overall the conference was very good. I came away with new ideas and things to think about. Loved the dancers.*

*I am looking forward to the next one!*

*The venue was excellent. Catering superb the organisation and planning was extraordinary – the conference flowed effortlessly – well done. Loved the dancers!*

## UPCOMING PSC WORKSHOPS

### Learning Circles:

#### Places and Spaces: Reimagining Environments in Children's Services

Presented by Semann & Slattery

First session: Thursday 4 February 10.00am – 12.30pm

Session held at Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stirling

#### Early Years Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice

Presented by Semann & Slattery

First Session Thursday 4 February 6.30pm – 9.00pm

Session held at Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stirling

### Survival Skills

A Professional Development opportunity that will provide program directors and co-ordinators with a set of baseline skills to assist in the delivery of quality early and middle childhood programs:

Presented by Semann & Slattery

Session 1

#### Moving Beyond Survival

6 & 7 April 9.00am – 4.00pm

Session held at Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stirling

Session 2

#### Moving Beyond Survival and Fighting Fit – A follow up

8 & 9 June 9.00am – 4.00pm

Session held at Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stirling

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Put them in your diary

#### Australian Research in Early Childhood Conference

19–21 January 2010

Monash University, Peninsular Campus  
Frankston, Melbourne, Victoria

For more information:

[arece@education.monash.edu.au](mailto:arece@education.monash.edu.au)

#### Unpacking Listening: Language, Silence and Space

12–13 March 2010

Macquarie University, Institute of  
Early Childhood

For more information:

[www.semansslattery.com](http://www.semansslattery.com)

#### Early Childhood Intervention Australia Conference 2010

Every day in every way: Creating  
learning opportunities for every child

20–22 May 2010

National Convention Centre, Canberra

For further information:

[www.ecia2010.com.au](http://www.ecia2010.com.au)

#### Kidsafe Playground Conference

*The nature of play*

19–20 April 2010

UWA Club, Crawley, WA

#### Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Conference

27–29 July 2010

The conference will provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, policy makers, researchers, government representatives, other non-government organisations and various industry representatives to gather and make renewed commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.