



God said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jeremiah 31: 3

Reflective Practice Policy

Aim

To describe contemporary theories of reflective practice and critical reflection being used to guide practice in early education and care settings.

To create a range of tools to guide and assist our team to engage in thoughtful reflection of theories and ideas, with the aim of improving practices within our setting.

Implementation

A definition:

Ideas on reflective practice began in the early 20th century when John Dewey identified **reflective thinking** as "being purposeful and active, a conscious approach to consider beliefs and the grounds for these beliefs," (Dewey, 1910).

In the 1980's Donald Schon further developed these ideas, suggesting that "**reflective practice** involves thoughtfully considering your own experiences as you make the connection between knowledge and practice, under the guidance of an experienced professional within your discipline"(Schon, 1996).

From the EYLF:

Critical reflection: Describes reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45).

Reflective practice: A form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, early childhood educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 13).



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PRACTICE

Documentation of reflective practice is embedded throughout the program and can be best seen in:

Group Reflection

- The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) plays an important role in the reflection and planning process.
- Staff Meeting/ Professional Development days provide an opportunity for the whole team to gather together to debate and discuss ideas which will impact on our future practice.
- Review of our policies will often result in updates as a result of reflection and discussion of best or wise practice.

Personal Reflection

- Educator reflection diary - allows for regular reflection of practice by each educator. The diary is personal and will not be seen by others. As we recognise members of our educating team as possessing unique personalities and learning styles, we encourage each educator to choose their own form of diary (paper or electronic).
- Educators' personal group time notes - allows for educators to reflect on teaching strategies for the group of children they are working with.
- Educators' individual work plan - allows for each educator to reflect on their own practice in more depth, and to plan for future professional development.

Links with the NQS

QA1	Educational Program and Practice	
	1.2	Practice: Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development
	1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding:
	Assessors may SIGHT the written program, including examples of documented reflective practice .	
QA1	1.3	Assessment and Planning: Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
	Questions to guide reflection centres on taking a planned and reflective approach to program implementation.	
	1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection .
	1.3.2	Critical Reflection: Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.



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QA4	Staffing Arrangements	
	4.1	Staffing Arrangements enhance children's learning and development
		Educators are likely to be responsive, purposeful and reflective when staffing arrangements at the service enable them to direct their full attention to their work with children, and when they do not have to attend simultaneously to other tasks. How do we engage in reflective practice to support and encourage each other, support ongoing learning and focus on quality improvement?
	4.2.1	Professional Collaboration: Management, educators and staff work together with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills
	<p>Assessors may sight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence recorded in staff meeting minutes or reflective journals that demonstrates that the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators are engaging with their colleagues to reflect on practice, explore new possibilities and record outcomes that have resulted in improved practice so that children and families benefit. 	



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QA7	Governance and Leadership.	
	Effective leadership establishes a culture of reflective practice to encourage continuous improvement across all aspects of the service, resulting in a higher quality service for children and their families.	
7.2.1	Continuous improvement: There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.	
	Assessors may discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » engages in reflective practice on inclusion in the service’s Quality Improvement Plan • how the educational leader supports educators to engage in reflective practice to refine strategies and to create and sustain improvements 	
7.2.2	Educational Leadership: The educational leader is supported and leads the development implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.	
	<p>Assessment and planning cycle: An ongoing cycle of assessment and planning is critical to the delivery of a quality educational program. The educational leader plays a pivotal role in this process, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting educators to understand and implement reflective practice (also see Element 1.3.2) <p>Educational leadership: Assessors may observe the educational leader working with educators to build capacity and understanding about their pedagogy and practice, including ways they assess, reflect on and plan for children’s learning.</p> <p>Assessors may discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the service supports the educational leader to have opportunities for discussions with educators, provide mentoring, lead reflective practice, and realise the intent of their role. <p>Assessors may sight evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflective practice discussions that critically examine current practice and that lead to quality improvement. 	
7.2.3	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.	

In each Standard - Exceeding Theme 2: Practice is informed by **critical reflection**.

EYLF

QA7	Principle	
	5	On going learning and reflective practice



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APPENDIX 1

Current research and ideas on reflective practice for early childhood educators:

Matthew Stapleton from Centre Support suggests that critical reflection involves considering different perspectives - looking through another person's eye - seeing their perspective. Eg a child, parent, other educator, the community. He also suggests that it is important to SHOW the changes that have occurred as a result of your reflection.

Building a Reflective Culture, (Melinda Miller).

What is reflected on in the course of a day and over time should be meaningful to educators, children and families. It is not practical to reflect critically on everything that occurs within classroom practice... Critical reflection can be focussed on a long-term issue, or more spontaneous events and interaction that have meaning for key stakeholders. Reflections can occur verbally between educators and also in thought. Educators may include written reflections as part of their documentation or in a communal journal. Where appropriate, reflections should be shared with children and families to draw attention to the intellectual and evolving nature of educators' work.

A reflective culture will support all educators, regardless of their qualification and experience, to engage in critically reflective practices.

Key elements to build a reflective culture:

- Direct teaching: explicit support when learning about and applying processes of critical reflection
- Modelling: of the processes of critical reflection by those more experienced (in this area)
- Collaboration: a collaborative approach because multiple voices on perspectives are included in the discussion. Collaboration can occur between educators, other professionals, children and families.
- Physical spaces and resources
- Time: Effective reflection takes time and practice
- Expectation: built into the culture of the service

(Miller, p 6)

From Gowrie's Reflection in Practice Team Meeting Package, p11 – based on Donald Schon's work:

Reflection in action – This involves thinking on our feet during day to day activities while you are in the moment. on the spot and engaged with children.

Reflection on action – This involves reflecting after an event by exploring why we behaved in the way that we did and about the things that influenced the situation. (Relate this to the discussion that just took place about the question on the previous slide).



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Reflection for action – This is a proactive way of thinking about the future. For example: Thinking about the way in which the centre philosophy, your discussions with parents, your reflections on your own practices and your observations of children will influence your future planning.

From Reflective Practice by Liz Rouse:

Reflective journals are a history of learning and reflecting over a period of time, a way to revisit your own development as (an educator), and each time you revisit the journal you should again reflect on how your practice has evolved (p24).

Levels of Reflection (p18):

Technical reflection: Educators are concerned with knowledge of what and how to manage the day to day tasks of working with children and how to apply the knowledge they learnt in their training

Practical reflection: Educators are concerned with the interplay between principles and practice, the assumptions that underlie their practice and how these relate to values and goals.

Critical reflection: is concerned with issues beyond what is happening in the program, It involves thinking about our own biases and beliefs may be influencing our practice.... Critiquing our practice by exploring moral, ethical and broader social issues and how these might impact on our practice and accepting our own imperfections.

Ideas for engaging in reflective practice (Rouse, p23 - 25)

- Reflective journal
- Reflective conversation
- Portfolios: Just as in the portfolios we create for the children in our program, a portfolio can also be a way to develop an understanding of ourselves as professionals, and to reflect on our practice as it relates to our thinking about the early childhood arena. (They can be) paper based or electronic, and can include items such as documents relating to frameworks, standards and codes of practice. Examples of how our practice reflects these documents can be included and then shared with others as a starting point for reflective conversations. Examples of our work and interactions with children, families and colleagues can also be included and revisited in reflective moments to provide learning for the future. Portfolios can also include research articles or readings, and written comments can be added to provide a reflection on why that reading is important to your practice and what you have learnt about yourself, your practice or your understanding of early childhood from reading this article.

...the reflective portfolio can be an individual reflection of your journey or a collection of evidence that represents the team's journey into reflective practice. By reflecting on the entries in the portfolio, we can discover ways to understand the present and how this has been shaped by past experiences and challenges, as well as looking forward. These



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reflections can provide knowledge and understanding on how to generate new ways to face these challenges or approach problems.

- Case studies and scenarios
- Reflective responses to readings
- Videos and photos
- Peer observations
- Reflective prompts and questions for starting out



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APPENDIX 2

What the National Quality Standard says about Reflective practice

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 1.3

A planned and reflective approach to program implementation

- How do we ensure that the way we document and plan for children's learning aligns with current approaches?
- How can we work collaboratively with each family to share information about children's learning, development and participation in the program?
- How do we recognise and support continuity of learning at the service, and how does information gathered from each child's home, school or other support service inform planning for continuity of learning?
- What do we do to critically reflect on and evaluate the program, how is this documented and how are our evaluations used to make informed curriculum decisions to improve outcomes for children?
- How do we use critical reflection when discussing programs with colleagues?
- How do we critically reflect on all aspects of pedagogical practice so that quality improvements occur?

What Element 1.3.2 aims to achieve

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves educators thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for children. It drives educators' program planning and implementation. Educational leaders support educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work, to analyse their actions objectively and motivate them to reflect and explore new ideas and approaches as part of daily practice.

Reflective practice is an ongoing, dynamic process that supports educators to think honestly and critically about all aspects of professional practice, including whether all children and families are included. Reflective practice guides educators to gather information from different perspectives to gain insights that will support, inform and enrich their decision-making about each child's learning.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives, with a focus on implications for equity, inclusion and diversity. It takes reflective practice to a deeper level and includes educators analysing or diagnosing what happened and why. For example:

- why educators may have responded in the way they did
- how educators felt



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- why educators made certain decisions
- what may have influenced educators' actions
- which theoretical perspectives educators draw on in their decision-making (whether deliberately or subconsciously).

Critical reflection helps educators to build on their knowledge and skills, identifying practice that can be continued as well as what might need to be improved or changed. It also helps educators to identify ways to improve opportunities for children's participation, learning and development.

Educational leaders support educators to consider questions such as:

- How do we currently examine our practices and decision-making, and identify improvements as well as successes?
- Have we considered which children may be advantaged and whether any child is disadvantaged?
- How do we use the approved learning framework/s to help us reflect?
- How are we creating opportunities for conversations, debates, and collaborative inquiries as a team, ensuring that all voices are heard and responded to with respect?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What strategies do I use to demonstrate that I value diversity and work to ensure all children have opportunities to fully participate in the program?

(adapted from the Early Years Learning Framework, p. 13; and the Framework for School Age Care, pp. 11–12).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.3.2 (for all services) - Critical reflection

Assessors may observe educators:

- working with children to document and reflect on their experiences and learning
- using a variety of methods, such as jottings, children's comments and conversations, photographs and examples of children's work, to assist their reflection on children's experiences, thinking and learning
- focusing on adapting the program to include all children, rather than adapting a child's routine or requirements to fit the program



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- reflecting-in-action by changing or altering experiences which are not engaging children
- speaking briefly to one another during the day about aspects of practice that they have changed or need to change
- making brief notes when appropriate so that they can recall an aspect of practice that may be challenging them, or that they may have questions about.

Assessors may discuss:

- how reflective practice, including critical reflection, is used as an ongoing process in the service
- how the educational leader supports educators to engage in reflective practice that is in line with current recognised approaches
- how educators use critical reflection to make changes to their program and practice
- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the events of each day, including thinking about what happened and why, the successes and what can be extended or changed
- how educators reflect on whether the program is an inclusive learning environment and supports each child to participate fully or if there are barriers to participation
- how children's comments about their experiences of the program are recorded and considered as part of the reflection process
- whether information gathered provides insights about curriculum decision-making that supports and extends children's learning, development and wellbeing
- how the educational leader promotes a culture of professional enquiry, where practices and outcomes are reviewed and new ideas are generated.



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Assessors may sight:

- documentation that shows evidence of critical reflection, such as reflection journals or diaries
- documentation that reflects on all aspects of the program and may include jottings about:
 - » the effectiveness of arrivals/departures,
 - » interactions, responsiveness and relationships with particular children
 - » transitions and routines
 - » planned experiences and spontaneous child directed learning
 - » incidental and planned group times
 - » the environment and experiences provided
 - » intentional teaching strategies
 - » communication with colleagues and families
 - » any other aspects of practice to prompt further thinking and discussion
 - » the effectiveness of resources and equipment used
 - » experiences and learning outcomes achieved
 - » review of curriculum content and pedagogy
- if the service has a **Strategic Inclusion Plan**, how the service reflects on adaptations made to reduce barriers to participation.

What we aim to achieve with Exceeding Theme 1

When the service team approaches practice with a shared sense of understanding, purpose and agency, this creates a stable, high quality education and care environment that benefits children, families, and the broader service community. The underlying consistency in intent and approach to practice across the service helps to create a sense of continuity, predictability, and security for each child. A consistent approach to practice does not mean that practice is rigid, unchanging, unreflective, or habit-based. Rather, practice is of high quality, thoughtful and intentional, but is also responsive to the everyday flow of events.

Understanding what is expected and why provides a basis for ongoing discussions about practice, and for ensuring systems are in place to re-think and refine practice, contributing to continuous quality improvement over time.



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Exceeding Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Overview

Critical reflection means continually thinking about, questioning, analysing and re-evaluating practice to identify where further improvements could be made for educators, children and families.

At the Exceeding level for any standard, members of the service team engage in ongoing critical reflection on their practice, as appropriate for their role and responsibilities within the service.

Individually and as a team they:

- ask why and how questions of themselves and each other, such as:
 - » Why do we do that?
 - » Why do we do it in this way?
 - » How does this practice contribute to improved outcomes for all children and families?
 - » Does this practice advantage some children and families and disadvantage others?
 - » Does this practice include any stereotyping, bias or inequity?
 - » Does this practice need to change?
 - » How can we improve this practice?
- consider the theoretical perspectives underpinning their actions and decision-making
- seek different views and opinions and are open to exploring possibilities that they may not have previously considered
- draw on various sources of knowledge and research evidence, and evaluate these sources for their credibility and relevance as well as their 'fit' to the context of the service
- consider the rationale behind new ideas and practices to assess if they align with the approved learning framework and the philosophy of the service

Respect, trust and collegiality are valued so that all members of the service team are able to raise concerns, ask difficult questions, challenge the way things are currently done, and create change in the approach to practice across the service.

The service is responsive to issues, incidents, complaints or feedback. All members of the service team are willing to reconsider their views and re-evaluate their practice, and are mindful of their responsibility to make ethical and well-informed decisions.



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What we aim to achieve with Exceeding Theme 2

Engaging in critical reflection supports the service team to make well-informed decisions and plans, to implement and evaluate carefully considered changes to their practice, and to respond with integrity to complex situations and challenges.

It also assists them to articulate the reasons for their decisions and practices and to be accountable to children, families, colleagues and communities for their choice of approaches.

Continuously reflecting on practice assists educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work and motivated to explore new ideas and approaches.

Reflective practice supports educators to continue their ongoing professional learning by further developing their knowledge, skills and practices. It also encourages them to stay focussed on continuous quality improvement to improve outcomes for children.

Assessment indicators for Exceeding Theme 2

Services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for standards in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice. The following list of indicators is designed to assist services and assessors to consider if practice reflects critical reflection as expected at the Exceeding NQS level.

- Practice is systematically and regularly reflected on and implications for further improvements are purposefully identified and implemented
- Ongoing learning and quality improvements occur through a systematic cycle of inquiry
- All members of the service team, as appropriate to their role and responsibilities:
 - » are aware of the influences on their practice including the key theoretical perspectives identified in the approved learning framework/s and are able to describe how they draw on these in their work
 - » can identify personal, professional and organisational values in relation to practice
 - » are comfortable raising concerns and challenging the way things are done, with the expectation that their views will be valued and considered
 - » are mindful of their responsibility to make ethical and informed decisions
 - » consider the social justice and equity implications of their practice
- Decision-making processes draw on diverse perspectives, which are considered in relation to how they align with the service philosophy and the approved learning framework/s used at the service
- Reasons for decisions that result in changes to practice are clearly understood by all



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- The service is responsive to issues, incidents, complaints or feedback, and these inform ongoing quality improvement

A tailored list of indicators of what can be considered Exceeding practice for each standard is included in the Guide to the National Quality Standard.

What the EYLF says about reflective practice. From *Belonging, Being, Becoming*, p13

Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice.

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, early childhood educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change.

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

Overarching questions to guide reflection include:

- What are my understandings of each child?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do?
- Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice?

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when early childhood educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated.

(p13)



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From Educators: Belonging, Being, Becoming, p7 -8:

Ongoing learning and reflective practice is one of the five Principles of the Framework. Reflective practice helps us to become increasingly thoughtful about our work and motivates us to look deeper and explore new ideas and approaches. The Framework aims to make reflective practice and inquiry a part of our everyday practice.

The Guide and the Framework are both designed to engage us, and teams, in critical thinking, reflection, and inquiry and culturally competent practices, with the aim to develop new insights into what we do and why we do it.

The Guide will support us to be reflective practitioners by providing:

- critical questions to reflect upon
- ways to promote a culture of inquiry
- a process for inquiry.

Reflective practice is more likely to lead to change when it is undertaken collectively. Learning together with colleagues draws upon the diverse knowledge, experiences, views and attitudes of individuals within the group. It is a way to experiment with new ideas and ways of teaching and caring, and to keep motivated about making a positive difference to children's learning.

Creating and sustaining a culture of inquiry requires:

- trust and collegiality so that educators feel able to talk about their concerns and the challenges they face
- respect for different viewpoints
- opportunities for all educators to contribute to discussions and debates
- commitment to inquiry at the organisational level
- time for reflection and time to develop skills in a range of approaches to reflective practice (for example, journal writing, critical conversation groups)
- recognition that there is no one right approach or answer
- courage to question taken-for-granted practices and assumptions.

An inquiry process includes the following steps:

- reflect upon practices, identify concerns, choose an issue
- gather information and evidence on what is currently happening and look for patterns
- reflect upon what the information is telling you
- frame a question to be explored
- decide upon action—change of practice
- evaluate the change
- start the process again.

Reflective educators often find it useful to have a 'critical friend' to support and challenge their thinking and practice. A critical friend can:

- inspire, reminding you of the importance of your work and ongoing learning
- provoke, challenging you to explore your beliefs and practices (the why and how you do things in particular ways) with questions, new insights and alternative perspectives
- support, helping you to identify information, resources and processes to expand your inquiry
- provide collegiality, lending you an ear, a shoulder and friendship.



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Talk and reflect about

How do you currently examine your practices?

In what ways do you currently plan for improvement in your practices?

How might the Framework help you to reflect on your practices?

What might a learning community look like in your setting?

What systems and processes do you have to meet with colleagues and talk about children's learning together?

How might you create opportunities for conversations, debates, and collaborative inquiries, ensuring that all voices are heard and responded to with respect?

Going deeper

Look at page 13 of the Framework and reflect individually/with your team on the overarching questions outlined. These questions may spark reflective conversations or they may help you develop your own questions for inquiry. How will you use the Framework to make decisions about the pedagogies you choose so that culture is recognised and supported and all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, realise their potential?

Try out

Scan the Framework and select a section that you/ your team would like to begin with.

Get together to talk about what people's responses are to their initial reading.

Decide on an element of your program about which you would like to take a 'snapshot'. Look at what's visible in your program and what's not visible.

This could be done through:

- reviewing photographs to decide what Learning Outcomes are reflected
- looking at learning journeys/portfolios
- looking at children's displays of work around your environment.

Talk about the data you have collected and think about what it is telling you.

How do you demonstrate that you acknowledge and build on the context and discourse of each child and family in your setting, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

What concerns/challenges does it raise for you?

This would be a good time to begin a journal to record the conversations and document your ongoing learning as you 'unpack' the Framework. You might like to read examples of practitioner inquiry to help you/your whole staff team understand this approach (p7-8)



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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Application

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SPC Preschool Committee - Barbara Black	7 Feb 2020	Feb 2021

Document Control

Issue	Date	Author	Change Description
1	7 Feb 2020	Lisa Collins	New policy

A copy of this policy been signed by the above staff members and can be found in the Reflective Practice folder in the preschool office.