

Information sheet

BELONGING, BEING & BECOMING

Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships

Research shows the importance of relational pedagogy for children's optimal learning, development and wellbeing. Educators who establish and maintain secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships support children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, learn new things and take calculated risks.

This information sheet supports the Principle, Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships in *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) V2.0*.

It provides you with reflective questions as you consider your practice, service philosophy and children's program in relation to this Principle.



Links to the National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS recognises the potential of the educational program and practices to enhance each child's learning and development. The EYLF V2.0 Principle Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships is reflected in several quality areas of the NQS, with a particular focus in:

QA1: Educational program and practice

Element 1.1.3: Program learning opportunities – All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

Element 1.2.2: Responsive teaching and scaffolding – Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.

Element 1.2.3: Child directed learning – Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.

QA2: Children's health and safety

Element 2.1.1: Wellbeing and comfort – Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

QA3: Physical environment

Element 3.2.1: Inclusive environment – Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.

QA4: Staffing arrangements

Element 4.2.2: Professional standards – Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

Respectful relationships are a cornerstone to support children’s learning, development and wellbeing, and play a significant role in a child’s sense of belonging and how they interact with the world around them.

QA5: Relationships with children

QA6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Standard 6.1: Supportive relationships with families – Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

Element 6.2.3: Community engagement – The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

QA7: Governance and Leadership

Element 7.1.1: Service philosophy and purpose – A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service’s operations.

- This Principle encompasses relational and place-based pedagogies, including the importance of valuing rituals and routines, and educators assisting children to support their own and others’ wellbeing.
- It emphasises children’s connections with educators and peers, and highlights how important relationships are to underpinning learning and teaching practices in education and care settings.
- In this principle, it values that educators recognise children’s learning, development, and wellbeing takes place in a nest of relationships and that context is important when developing a child-centered curriculum.

What does this look like in practice?

- Educators actively prioritise nurturing relationships through [culturally safe](#) and responsive interactions and provide children with consistent emotional support to assist each child to feel secure, confident and included.
- Familiar [routines and everyday rituals](#) are in place based on children’s preferences and the dynamics of the day to ensure that children develop the abilities, skills and understandings they require for interacting with others. For example, self regulation skills.
- Educators are at the children’s level, engaging with them in a relaxed and unhurried manner, talking with children about what is about to happen during routines, rituals and transitions.
- Educators build nurturing relationships with each child that support them to feel valued as competent and capable individuals by actively engaging in each child’s learning and sharing decision-making with them. Educators support children as they begin to empathise with others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork.
- Relationships between educators and children are meaningful with interactions being warm, caring, responsive and respectful. Educators’ ability to adjust and tailor their interactions is important to best support the differing ages, individual strengths, dispositions, confidence and varying capabilities of each child.

- Respectful relationships are a cornerstone to supporting children’s learning and development and play a significant role in a child’s sense of belonging and how they interact with the world around them. Educators respectfully participate in children’s play and use children’s cues to guide their level and type of involvement.

Examples of specific age groups include:

Under 2 years

- Each child is supported to build secure [attachment relationships](#) with consistent and familiar educators within the environment.

2 – 3 years

- Educators provide opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings through being patient, gentle, calm and reassuring, especially when children express distress, frustration or anger.

3 – 6 years

- Educators collaborate with children about routines, rituals, transitions and experiences to give them opportunities to demonstrate [agency](#).

Reflective questions and provocations

- How could this Principle be strengthened in the service philosophy to support and embed quality?
 - » ACECQA – [Information sheet – QA1 Supporting agency: Involving children in decision-making](#)
- How does each educator’s practice reflect a deep commitment to building and maintaining respectful and equitable relationships with each child?
 - » ACECQA – [We hear you blog – Responsive, respectful relationships](#)
- How are interactions between educators and children across the service supporting each child to feel secure, confident and included?
 - » Victorian Government – [Practice principles for teaching birth to 8 years](#)

- What are the steps taken to regularly reflect on the documentation of children’s learning to ensure it shows evidence that educators’ interactions with children are used to support children’s developing ideas, skills and relationships?
 - » ACECQA – [We hear you blog – Documentation – what, why and how](#)
- What are the strategies for educators to reflect on, identify and minimise the impact of their own biases on their practices and relationships with children?
 - » ACECQA – [DDA tip sheet – 6 tips for making reasonable adjustments in early years centre-based services](#)
- How regularly does the team engage in robust debate and discussion in which personal, professional and organisational values that influence relationships between educators and children are identified and discussed?
 - » Commonwealth of Australia – [Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)

ACECQA references and resources

- Australian Government Department of Education – [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0, 2022](#)
- ACECQA – [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)
- ACECQA – [DDA tip sheet – 6 tips for making reasonable adjustments in early years centre-based services](#)
- ACECQA – [Information sheet – QA1 Supporting agency: Involving children in decision-making](#)
- ACECQA – [Information sheet – QA5 Relationships with children](#)
- ACECQA – [We hear you blog – Documentation – what, why and how](#)
- ACECQA – [We hear you blog – Responsive, respectful relationships](#)

Other references and resources

- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) – [Code of Ethics](#)
Copyright Early Childhood Australia, All Right Reserved.
- Tasmanian Department of Education – [Respectful relationships education: Early years – Teaching and learning package](#)
- Victorian Government – [Practice principles for teaching birth to 8 years](#)