



THE NATURE OF PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN

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THE NATURE OF PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN

The curriculum is everything professionals do to support children's wellbeing and learning, the intentional provisions and the offerings they make in order to create possibilities and opportunities for children's engagement.

The conversion by children of these opportunities and possibilities into actual experiences, and the meanings they make with them, assumes forms that are sometimes expected and predictable and often unexpected and unimagined. What children do with the provisions is influenced by their abilities, what they observe others doing, the encouragement and support they receive from others, and what interests them at the time.

PROVISIONS, NOT ACTIVITIES

Most traditional curriculum and curriculum framework documents place major emphasis on the categories of activities and experiences that are offered to children and the anticipated outcomes from those in terms of children's learning. To do so in this document would be incompatible with this Framework. Context, children, parents and community, and most of all the exercise of professional judgment grounded in extensive wisdom dictate what should be provided. Content for children's experiences can be just about anything, although it is possible to make predictions about likely content. While the content is not prescribed, what the Framework does is provide guidance about what to do with the content.

The focus on the potential and possibilities of children and the view of them as more capable and resourceful than they are often thought to be by adults also means that it is not sensible, in fact, not possible, to specify all outcomes, as many will be surprises and unexpected outcomes. However, it is possible to discuss some likely desirable outcomes.

The terms *provisions*, *experiences* and *opportunities*, rather than *activities*, are used deliberately. Often the focus in children's services is on activities in a narrow sense at the expense of

some of the more pervasive and more important dimensions of the child's experience. The term activities is typically used to designate an experience that has the following characteristics:

- Available at a designated time and for a certain amount of time only
- Often requires adult preparation and supervision
- Often has a pre-determined fixed outcome
- Frequently results in a 'product'
- Is instigated typically by professionals, not by children
- Is sometimes something that the adult is invested in
- Sometimes sits apart from the flow of the day or session, somewhat unrelated to the rest of the provisions
- Is often viewed by adults (both parents and professionals) as having 'educational' value

A focus on activities often means that professionals pay relatively less attention to other dimensions of the provisions: interactions and relationships, routines or daily living experiences, opportunities and possibilities offered by the physical environment, the structure and flow of the day. All of these are significant in contributing to the quality of the child's experience overall. In other words, the most powerful experiences for the child are just as likely, if not more likely, to happen around the edges of what is planned for, outside of activities. What are traditionally labelled activities are but one dimension of the provisions for children rather than the centrepiece or most important part of the provisions.

Working within this Framework involves seeing possibilities, being thoughtful about opportunities provided, and looking at possibilities in the unorthodox.

EXAMPLE OF MAKING MEANING IN CONTEXT

From a mobile preschool session: We arrived to find a dead bird inside, mice through the kitchen and a 'porno' magazine in the toilet. To add to this a paddock full of toadstools was in our immediate play area. However, among all the risks we had identified and were dealing with we found the biggest and most magical red and white spotted mushrooms, the ones that are in fairytales, in the paddock. So we picked them and displayed three huge ones and one tiny one for the children and parents. Everyone was amazed and excited with wonder. We drew mushrooms, painted mushrooms and looked at how many were in the paddock next door under the pine trees. What a great day we had considering it started out so bad! And by the way, at lunchtime one of the staff discovered that a mouse had got into her lunch bag and eaten her lunch. Each of the children shared some of their lunch with her.

This is an excellent example of taking advantage of the reality of the circumstances of the service. It is quite possible that from a child's perspective the most significant event of that session was sharing lunch with an important adult, that is, making a real

contribution to the well being of someone else. This is also a wonderful event, although certainly not one that was planned, and provided an excellent opportunity to build a sense of community through sharing and collaboration.

THE NATURE OF DESIRABLE PROVISIONS

Professional knowledge enables predictions to be made about the kinds of provisions that are likely to be engaging for children. Babies love to explore objects with their hands and their mouths. Children with a visual impairment are likely to be interested in experiences that capitalise on their listening skills. Most toddlers who have just learned to walk love carting things around, moving things from one place to the other. Children whose mobility is limited or who are not mobile need access to materials and equipment. However, while the predictions may give guidance to the professional about provisions, care has to be taken that they do not become a prescription or recipe about what to provide that blinds the professional to truly seeing what children are capable of doing and are interested in.

This Framework advocates learning through meaning making, allowing evidence of children's

interests to inform the provisions and opportunities. Anything a child expresses interest in is followed up. It is inappropriate for the professional to deny children's interests or deem them inappropriate and therefore ignore or actively discourage them. What the professional has to do is to consider what to do with the interest, where to take it. That is where professional judgement comes into the equation.

In general, the kinds of provisions viewed as most desirable for children's learning are ones that:

- Acknowledge the child's capabilities and resources
- Support relationships, interaction and communication with others, both children and adults
- Are relevant in the context of the children's lives and experience and support the development of meanings and connections
- Reflect the values of the children's service and its priorities for children's learning and development

Routine daily experiences can embody these characteristics. Even the powerful experience of an adult disciplining a child in response to unacceptable behaviour can embody these characteristics to some degree. Experiences traditionally categorised as play in the literature certainly embody these characteristics. All provisions, all opportunities offered to children can be placed on continua depicting where they sit in relation to the characteristics above.

THE CAPABLE AND RESOURCEFUL CHILD

The child has considerable power and control to influence the experience and its impact or result, and to an appropriate extent has the opportunity to create or construct it.

A major consideration is that children deserve support to establish themselves as members of the community, as contributors with a sense of responsibility and commitment. Children's

engagement is most meaningful when it has a genuine purpose.

Experiences that are open-ended, where there is not a fixed pre-determined outcome or product, encourage creativity and self-expression and cater for a range of abilities. Children often "stretch themselves" and demonstrate greater ability in these kinds of experiences where there is no set standard, no definition of right or wrong ways.

Play as a medium for learning and development

Traditionally in children's services play is viewed as the cornerstone of good practice that promotes children's learning and development. However, in this Framework there is no major distinction made between play and other types of appropriate experiences that support children's learning. Labelling some experiences as play and some as not play is somewhat artificial, given that play is in part a state of mind, an approach or attitude toward an experience rather than the experience itself.

That having been said however, the provision of opportunities for open-ended child-directed play in a rich environment is very important.

Traditional notions of play include the following:

- The child participates voluntarily, not compulsorily.
- The child has power; the experience has inherent meaning.
- The child can invent the rules.
- The emphasis is on the process rather than the outcome.
- Much of the time, although not always, it is joyful.

Most of the experiences in a children's service where this Framework is implemented would have some of these characteristics to some extent.

In making provisions for children's learning, often the professional will have an outcome in mind but may allow the child to dictate or have control over

the process. An example would be if the professional told the children that she had put out a range of art and craft materials, and that she would like them to do something with them that related to the recent picnic they had in the local park.

Similarly, a professional may want to encourage babies to use their hands and so will put out on a mat a range of toy cars, blocks, and small animals for them to use as they wish. As another example, a professional may say to a child with speech difficulties that she wants the child to indicate in some way which book she wants to look at.

Alternatively in some experiences the outcome matters less, but there are always rules or some guidelines that the professional will enforce. An example of this would be when the children go outside or go for a walk. There are also occasions when the professional is appropriately very directive, for example, in a situation of danger.

The provision of open-ended play experiences that may go in a direction that the professional did not envisage acknowledges children as capable and resourceful. Such experiences also empower children to create meaning, to create links between their life experiences past and present.

EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN TAKING SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM THE EXPERIENCE THAN WAS INTENDED

The centre had two bottle-fed lambs that had grown enough to need shearing. A shearer and his dog were organised to come and demonstrate shearing to the children. The dog rounded up the sheep and they were shorn. That afternoon when the parents came to pick up the children staff suggested that they tell them what had happened that day. One child responded, "It was wonderful. A man came to the centre and he knew how to roll his own cigarettes"!

EXAMPLE OF OPENNESS TO CHILDREN'S MEANING

An activity was organised with matchbox cars and large "mud maps" of the community that the adults had made. The aim was to focus on road safety. It became an amazing medium for social activity and communication, about who lived where, about making road signs and other things to go on the map. Adults were wise enough to see that this offering or provision, made with one purpose in mind, had taken on a different meaning for the children, one that didn't negate what they originally had in mind, but extended it. The adults were able to shift their own focus to support the experience as a social and communication one.

Play at its purest is when the child is most constructively powerful and open to possibilities. Professionals have to think about how to construct situations that allow a child with a disability to be constructively powerful. The professional supports play best when he or she knows each child well, trusts each child and appreciates the importance of children taking responsibility and owning their play. Supporting play does not mean that the professional is always passive. It is actually when adults are involved when some of the richest most complex play occurs. Adult involvement can take many forms, ranging from providing time, space and materials to playing with the child.

Routine daily living experiences as medium for learning

In any children's service, there is a range of experiences that are essential and occur on a regular basis. These include eating, sleeping and resting, toileting and nappy changing, hand washing, dressing and undressing, tidying up and maintaining the physical environment in a reasonable state, and arrivals and departures. Sometimes these experiences take up a substantial amount of the professional's time and energy, and constitute a major part of the child's experience in

the service. These experiences are fundamental to children's lives and development. They provide opportunities to nurture close relationships and to support many of the interests and skills of children. These kinds of experiences are especially promising for learning, as they are by their very nature meaningful and purposeful. For all these reasons, they are viewed not as time away from what is important but as experiences that are important and that can contribute in a positive way to the overall quality of the child's experience.

It is around the routine experiences of daily living that the professional has numerous opportunities to model respect, caring, warmth, responsiveness, and affection to young children. When children participate in these kinds of interactions, they benefit in at least two ways. These interactions are the heart of what leads to positive feelings about oneself, feelings of being an effective and valued human being. Secondly, children learn to care for and respect others from being cared for and respected themselves.

EXAMPLES OF BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The younger two year olds who sleep are patted by the older two year olds who don't sleep.

In the same room a group of four year old children came for a visit and saw that the beds for the two year olds were not made. Courtney asked, "Why don't the beds have sheets?" She was told that the staff are busy and the children make their own beds. Courtney then said, "That's sad. Let's make their beds for them." This has now become a ritual with the four year old children making the two year olds' beds each day.

A staff member was away sick. The children kept asking where she was and were told that she was at home because she was sick. Finally one child suggested that they ring her at home to see how she was. Staff helped the children to ring and each had a turn speaking with her.

If the child is viewed respectfully, as knowing what he or she needs, then to the extent possible, routine daily living experiences happen when the child indicates a need, or demonstrates that he or she is ready.

It is often in daily living experiences that children manifest their growing competence, their drive to take control and do things for themselves. Professionals are provided with opportunities to respond to the child as capable and resourceful, as they respond to indications of the child's interest in self-feeding or toileting for example. This does not mean abandoning the child as soon as signs of wanting to be independent appear, but standing back, allowing the child to do as much as she or he can, being encouraging and supportive, and being ready to step in and provide help when that is needed.

If relationships and interactions are to be encouraged, then meal and snack times are wonderful social times for pleasant interactions and communication. Nappy changes afford a brief but powerful one-to-one time between child and adult.

Daily living routines are areas of children's experience where cultural and other types of diversity that exist among families and differences between families' and the service's ways of doing things are highlighted. Parents may have very specific ideas about such things as what foods are appropriate, conventions and "manners" related to eating and drinking, time and method of helping children learn to use the toilet, and where children sleep as well as if and how they are helped to sleep. As has been emphasised throughout the Framework, discussions, negotiation and compromise occur between parents and professionals to work out an agreed upon experience for the child.

Arrivals and departures are a crucial time for increasing or diminishing a child's sense of power and security. These are not times to leave children

or parents to fend for themselves, especially if the child is distressed.

EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE OF RELATIONSHIP AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Every day at lunch time a group of two year olds pour their water and then touch glasses and say "Cheers".

The above is a small act, one which could easily be overlooked or dismissed as merely an example of toddlers being "cute". However, it actually represents toddlers having learned a ritual that they have observed adults engaging in. More significantly, it is through rituals such as these that a sense of community and fellowship is forged.

MEANINGFULNESS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

Emphasis on supporting and enhancing children's interests, reflecting the life and cultures of the community, responding to context, and ensuring meaning suggests that the content of provisions might well be unique to each individual service. The content of children's experiences in a children's service can be just about anything. What matters is not so much what the content is, but rather how, why and when it is provided.

The professional has to ask a number of questions:

- What are the children telling me that they are interested in?
- What are parents and other family members telling me that they want children to experience and know about?
- What do I observe and what am I aware of that is important in the lives of these children and families?
- What is going on in the community?
- How can I use the tasks of daily living in a meaningful way?
- How can I use my own interests and talents, as well as those of family members and colleagues, in the interests of children?
- Are there any community or cultural observances that should be reflected in some way in the children's experience?
- What does my professional knowledge about children and about practice tell me to introduce to children?
- What can I do constructively with unexpected opportunities and events?

Everyday real tasks

Children learn most effectively when what is to be learned is immediately relevant and useful. Children need to know why they are doing what they are doing. Doing real work that they see adults doing in the real world is often particularly meaningful. The maintenance of a children's services community, whatever its form, involves tasks such as shopping, setting the table for a meal, folding nappies, cooking, cleaning, posting letters, gardening, preparation of materials and experiences, moving things from one place to another – all of which can be enjoyable for children.

Contributing to the life of the group or the larger community in a meaningful way enhances children's sense of self worth and gives them the satisfaction of doing something for others. This can be as simple as helping with some cleaning, tending the garden, giving a toy to a crying baby, pushing a child in a wheel chair, or helping to set the table for lunch. A children's service that implements this Framework will actively seek out opportunities to involve children in an authentic way in these tasks.

Concerns children bring to the service

Very distressing, frightening, painful and disturbing experiences in some children's lives are likely to be brought to the children's service. The ways these are dealt with can provide powerful lessons to children, lessons about finding support and strength in the support of others, lessons about the fact that others have often had similar experiences, lessons about how almost always it helps to talk about things that are troubling them. There is nothing a child brings to service that is not appropriate to deal with in some way. The more confronting what the child brings to the professional, the more potentially powerful and significant are the lessons to be learned from how it is dealt with.

EXAMPLE OF ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT CHILDREN BRING AND BEING OPEN TO CHILDREN'S MEANING

In a group time when sharing news, a child announced that the police had come to his house last night and took his dad away, and Mum had blood all over her. The two professionals felt very uncomfortable and uncertain about how to respond, but the other children started talking about similar experiences they had had themselves or knew of. The teacher, without probing and without making value judgments, talked with the child about how he felt, and encouraged other children to participate.

What was being modelled by the children in the example above is acceptance of feelings, acceptance of the reality of people's lives, responding to children's meaning, and most importantly the power of relationships and communication to help deal with sadness and fear; that is, a "lesson" about the support that can come through relationships.

Professionals have to make a value judgment about the worth of various provisions. The most

important thing to keep in mind is that children learn much more and much more effectively when what they are learning fits with the context of their lives. An additional criterion is the extent to which experiences afford children the opportunity to make a legitimate contribution to the common good of the community.

In general, the most sensible way to approach provision for children's experiences is to think of

- depth and breadth
- big segments of time, time extended over days or even weeks
- a variety of kinds of linked experiences
- naturally occurring opportunities
- open materials that invite children to use their inventiveness, and wherever appropriate, natural materials, which have a kind of inherent meaning and also engender respect, understanding, and appreciation of the natural environment
- openness to the direction children take with the provisions made
- the provision of appropriate help and encouragement.

OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE DAY OR SESSION

The day (or session) has a natural rhythm, a relaxed pace where one part flows comfortably into the next, where transitions are smooth and natural, where children have large flexible "chunks" of time to get involved in what interests them without a sense of being hurried or having efforts cut off abruptly before they are finished. Over-structuring and dividing the day into discrete bits may give professionals a sense of control but has little meaning for children and often contributes to a hurried, stressful unsatisfying experience for adults and children alike.

Engaging in collaborative projects, being creative, solving problems, and using materials that are open ended require that the child knows in the beginning that there will be time to engage. Otherwise engagement is mainly superficial.

A natural easy flow of time also allows for children to discuss and reflect on what is happening.

EXAMPLE OF COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING THROUGH DISCUSSION

The group had planted peas. Snails were eating the peas. The teacher gathered the children together to discuss possible ways to solve the problem.

Madison: Get your clapping toy and put it in the garden. It will frighten the snails away.

Tessa: Yell really loudly at them and that will make them go away.

Mathew: Put bottles over the peas so the snails can't get to them.

Ambrose: Well you can put this stuff which is poison down and it will kill them or find a really really bright light and shine it on them and they will go blink and they won't be able to find the peas.

Jacob: Move them away from the peas to somewhere else in the garden.

Grace: Shout at them to 'GO AWAY'.

Mathew: Put them inside things so they can't get out.

Jacob: So they could only get out at night.

Ayla: Make a hole, put the pea-eating snails in it so they can't eat the peas any more.

Mitch: You could put them in bottles and take them to someone else's house.

Tessa: Put them into a flower so they don't eat anything else.

Greta: Put them in a tank and fill it with water.

Gemma: Put a cover over the peas so the snails can't eat the peas.

Lauren: Put something over the snails so it would stop them eating the peas.

These sorts of discussions cannot be hurried, and they need to happen when the issues arise, not at a scheduled group discussion time.

The structure allows for individual rhythms and patterns for eating, sleeping and resting, toileting, active and quiet times. It takes into account the times when children are most likely to be alert, able to concentrate, tired, active, or bored. In addition, the structure of each child's experience provides choice and balance, opportunities to engage in a variety of experiences. The aim is that there is a minimum amount of time when all children in the group have to do the same thing at the same time. In other words, the aim is that children have a choice about what they are doing much of the time. Predictable routines, such as sitting down together for a meal or for a group discussion at a regular time or washing hands before eating, give children a sense of mastery over their own experience. However, rigid adherence to timetables is at odds with responding to children and to providing an experience that has meaning in children's lives.

Transitions from one part of the day can contribute to the smoothness and pace of the day. Abrupt, everyone-at-the-same-time, no-warning, "stop this right now and pack away" transitions amount to no transitions at all, and cause frustration and disruption. They often result in there being much time when children are waiting, not doing anything constructive. Some children have difficulty stopping one experience, especially something they are engrossed in, and moving to another even

at the best of times, or changing abruptly from being active to being still and quiet. A respectful approach provides help for children to make transitions, to wind down, for example, after a busy active time, and to stop one thing and move to something else.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CONTENT

Obviously, honouring diversity means attending to it in the range of provisions for children. In general, it is not appropriate to “do” cultures. In part this is because children in this age group do not understand the concept of cultures. More importantly, however, focusing intensely on a number of aspects of a particular cultural group and then resorting to what is familiar increases the likelihood of stereotyping, dealing superficially and in a tokenistic way that re-inforces misconceptions and biases.

A much more appropriate approach is not to separate out or label experiences, materials and equipment as multicultural or different, but to incorporate these naturally and in response to children's interests. Music, stories, books, materials in the home corner, play materials, pictures – every aspect of the provisions for children can embody diversity.

The issue of observing holidays and special days and celebrations in children's services is one that provokes much controversy. It is an issue that must be worked through respectfully and conscientiously with all members of the children's service community. In a diverse community there are few universal holidays and celebrations, and to ignore that and acknowledge only the holidays and celebrations of the dominant cultural group runs counter to honouring diversity.

Although this Framework supports the children's service connecting with what is happening in the community, this does not mean that everything that happens in the community, including celebrations

and holidays, is mirrored or replicated in the service. In fact, it may be that a sensible complementary experience is to provide some respite from the excitement and anticipation of it for children.

THE IMPACT OF ATTENDANCE PATTERNS ON PROVISIONS

The nature of an appropriate experience for any given child depends on a number of factors, one of which is attendance patterns and the amount of time spent in the service. This is one part of the context for each child that must be taken into account. For example, if the child attends for long periods of time on a regular basis, then this experience constitutes a major part of this child's childhood, and this has implications for what the children's service needs to provide for that child. As another example, if attendance is irregular or for short periods of time, then it is harder to establish continuity of experience, it takes more time for the child to re-enter and settle, and relationships take longer to be established. If the child attends irregularly or for short periods of time and some or most of the other children attend more regularly then there are additional issues, such as the issue of coherence of experience. What is appropriate and meaningful for a particular child depends also in part on what is happening in other arenas of the child's life, for example if the child is going to more than one children's service.

PARTICULAR CATEGORIES OF PROVISION

There are many ways to classify or categorise provisions for young children in a children's service, and there is no one best way. Traditionally this has been done according to developmental domains. Some children's services adopt categories similar or identical to those used as subject areas in primary schools.

Because of the contemporary emphasis on these areas and how they should be dealt with in children's services settings, media and technology and literacy and numeracy will be discussed briefly.

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Most children today experience media and technology as an integral part of their lives. In fact, many of them are more knowledgeable and comfortable with it than many adults. Their play, interests, and concerns are often shaped quite powerfully by the media.

It would be incompatible with the notion of engaging with what is meaningful to children to say that there is no place in a children's service for television, videos, and computers. At the same time, the use of these needs to reflect consideration of the aims of the children's service. There is limited value in simply replicating in the children's service the opportunities that children have in other arenas of their lives. That is, if children spend a lot of time outside the children's service watching television and videos and playing with computers, there may be limited value in doing more of the same in the children's service.

Technology is a tool, a medium for providing possibilities and opportunities for children, and is viewed just as other materials and equipment are, that is, as resources for encouraging children to make meaning and to engage in life enhancing relationships.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Literacy and numeracy are defined in many different ways. For the purposes of this Framework, literacy is very closely linked to communication and involves:

- speaking and using written and visual means of

communication (words and other symbols) in ways that are appropriate to the context and that convey meaning to others

- listening, viewing, and reading to derive understanding.

Numeracy refers to the use of numbers and other mathematical concepts to analyse and solve problems using mathematical processes.

Within this Framework, children are seen as citizens in the present, and one of the aims of children's services is to support them to become active contributing members of the community. Functioning fully and effectively in the community requires that citizens are literate and numerate. There is a strong emphasis in the Framework on children being supported from birth to become competent in these areas. Opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy abound in children's experiences at home, in the community and in the children's service from infancy. These are particular areas of learning where professionals can support parents to exploit valuable learning opportunities for learning in the context of everyday life. The successful acquisition of skills and abilities in these areas by young people is a major concern in contemporary society.

Children make more useful meaning of experiences when they see that they have a useful purpose. Therefore, experiences relating to literacy and numeracy are integrated naturally and purposefully into the daily life of the service, not singled out for specific attention at specific times or imposed artificially and out of context.

Children's signs of interest in such things as identifying numbers and letters, de-coding text, writing, pretending to write, and learning words in other languages are perhaps more obvious signs of emerging literacy and numeracy, but so are such behaviours as engaging in complex dramatic play,

memorising text in books and pretending to read it, sequencing objects by size, engaging in one-to-one correspondence (for example, by placing one cup in front of each chair at the table), and “reading” pictures by talking about what is happening.

EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN KNOWING MORE THAN EXPECTED

Two children, both under three years of age, had shown interest in writing, and they were exploring the possibilities of shapes as symbols for letters and words. They were sticking small pieces of paper with their writing on it onto larger sheets of paper and in rows, in much the same way that text would appear on a page.

Everything that has been said about provisions for children and children’s learning in general applies to the areas of literacy and numeracy. Some guidelines related to these two areas are included in the section on provisions for communication later in this chapter.

EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN AS CAPABLE AND RESOURCEFUL

A teacher reads the book *The Lighthouse Keeper’s Lunch* to a group of children. She gets to the part where all the things Mrs. Grinling has sent over for his lunch are listed. One item is a “cold chicken garni”. She says instead “a cold chicken salad”, thinking that would be a more meaningful word for these children. Several children interrupt to say that it is not a cold chicken salad but rather a cold chicken garni.

As is the case with any other areas, children’s interests and achievements in areas typically identified as literacy or numeracy will vary. However, it is possible to suggest some general outcomes that might be appropriate to expect for most children by the time they leave the children’s

service to attend school. These are in part adapted from Foundation Outcomes for Kindergarten (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998).

In the areas of talking and listening

Children will communicate easily and effectively with peers and with adults in familiar informal situations. Examples include:

- Engaging in conversation
- Joining in songs, chants and rhymes
- Using non-verbal communication appropriately
- Understanding non-verbal communication of others
- Listening and responding to simple instructions
- Using a rich vocabulary
- Demonstrating pleasure in “playing with” language through rhyming, making up words, telling stories
- Demonstrating an awareness of the sounds in different words.

In the areas of reading and writing

Children will demonstrate the beginnings of understandings needed to learn to read and write. Examples include:

- Looking at books and other printed materials, commenting about their meaning, perhaps even attempting to “read” them through their pictures or from having memorised text because of repeated exposure
- Recognising their own name and perhaps attempting to write it
- Knowing the difference between writing and drawing
- Attempting to “write” by making marks resembling letters on a page

- Recognising different kinds of texts.

In the area of numeracy, children will demonstrate

- An awareness of same and different
- An awareness of pattern
- Knowledge of position and direction
- One-to-one correspondence
- Awareness of the relationship between parts and wholes.

Examples include:

- Sorting and describing objects in terms of their features, such as size, shape or colour
- Comparing and contrasting everyday objects, describing them in terms of the similarities and differences
- Recognising, describing and making simple number and spatial patterns
- Using everyday language associated with time, temperature and position
- Recognising and comparing sizes of things

using a variety of strategies such as estimating, counting, matching one-to-one

- Manipulating groups of objects by combining and separating.

REFLECTING THE FRAMEWORK

It would be possible for anyone with substantial experience in children's services to generate a very long list of provisions that are likely to be appropriate for children at different ages, and there are many such lists in the literature. However, there are many other provisions that may not be part of the standard repertoire in many children's services, in other words that are a bit unorthodox, that also provide rich opportunities and possibilities.

In developing a curriculum within this Framework, specific provisions in terms of content and experiences are based on evidence of children's interests and chosen in collaboration with children. In addition, specific provisions will support the values and priorities for children's learning and development identified by the children's service community.

The list of selected provisions that follows uses the same headings as those used in the discussion about the child's learning and development. The division into categories is artificial in as much as all experiences involve more than one of the categories. These are not special recommended provisions, but rather some general comments and a few representative examples of the kinds of experiences that support the major obligations in the Framework.

The child's sense of self

- Help the child in conversation to identify special likes and dislikes, favourites, features such as hair, eye, and skin colour, gender, and discuss how these are similar to and different from those of others.
- Point out and re-inforce what the child is good at. Offer more encouragement than discouragement, more positive feedback than negative.
- Encourage, as the child is ready, self-help skills such as managing eating, toileting.
- Greet and respond warmly to the child, demonstrating pleasure in her or his company.
- Affirm diversity in language, dress, ability, and gender.
- Discuss family and other aspects of the child's life outside the children's service.
- Encourage children to communicate with whatever skills they have.
- Listen and respond thoughtfully to children's efforts to communicate in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Make every effort to incorporate the child's home language into the program in a natural way and use alternative means of communication as well, when a child's first language is one other than the main language spoken at the service.
- Tell stories, share rhymes and poetry, encourage word games and other creative uses of language.
- Talk about how the same words can have different meanings.
- Discuss ways that the same messages can mean different things to different people.
- Share books and other printed material with children from infancy on, read to them often, look at and talk about books with them, and make books that document children's experiences.
- Make a rich array of books accessible to children, both texts that extend and relate to the children's experiences and current interests and texts that suggest new possibilities and broaden children's horizons.
- Support individual children's emerging interest in reading and writing through ensuring that materials and opportunities related to literacy are provided: children's books, maps, adult books, calendars, musical scores, paper and pens, timetables, menus, clocks, information from the internet.
- Encourage children to incorporate literacy and numeracy related experiences into their play by making provisions, for example, by putting a note pad and pen beside the telephone in the home corner, setting up an office or restaurant for dramatic play, encouraging children to find the items needed on the supermarket shelves.

THE COMMUNICATING CHILD

- Provide a rich environment, with lots of interesting things to talk about – for example, reminders of shared experiences in the past, unusual objects, engaging pictures.
- Talk to children naturally and in a meaningful way, about what is happening, about what is of interest to them.
- Provide time and an atmosphere that encourages children to communicate, especially with language when they are able.

- Provide many opportunities for children to appreciate the value of print.
- Respond to children's interest in numbers, letters, and decoding written text.
- Model the use of references, written or the internet, to answer questions, find out how to do something, help solve a problem.
- Provide encouragement for multiple means of expression, through movement, singing, puppets, the visual arts, music.
- Use words and phrases from a variety of languages.
- Emphasise language but maintain other ways of communicating.
- Respect the fact that different cultural groups have different notions of literacy; for example, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures tend to value oral literacy.
- Integrate numbers through such experiences as counting, adding to and taking away from, encouraging children to classify and match like objects.

THE THINKING, INVESTIGATING, QUESTIONING, EXPLORING, PROBLEM SOLVING CHILD

- Model curiosity and a desire to know and find out.
- Provide an abundance of open-ended materials and equipment that can be used in a variety of ways.
- Encourage the use of all the senses.
- Provide time and opportunities to explore interests in depth.
- Provide opportunities for children to explore the properties of objects, gravity, weight, sinking and floating and other physics concepts in appropriate ways.
- Pose legitimate questions and problems that may lead to investigations and problem solving.

- Actively promote the pleasures, advantages and satisfaction of engaging in shared exploration and problem solving.
- Take children on excursions into the community, ones that have meaning for them.

THE HEALTHY, PHYSICAL, ACTIVE CHILD

- Provide space and time to safely use all large motor skills and to gain control over the body.
- Make equipment available to encourage children to use their whole body and to develop skills.
- Encourage children to develop sound daily hygiene habits, for example, hand washing and teeth brushing.
- Provide nutritious and attractive food and promote healthy eating habits.

THE SOCIAL CHILD

- Provide many opportunities for children to become comfortable with diversity in gender, skin colour, and ability.
- Encourage children to work and play together as they are interested, and provide support to help them do so happily.
- Provide choices about being with others or safely alone.
- Ensure that each child develops a secure attachment with at least one adult in the service, but that the child is able to cope when that person is away.
- Model gentle interactions, empathy, negotiation and compromise and talk about these with children.
- Take children out into the community, taking advantage of both natural and human made environments.
- Provide appropriate means for children to develop feelings of being able to affect others in a positive way, to make a constructive difference.

- Give children opportunities to be with older and younger children.
- Actively encourage collaboration and relationships by highlighting the value of diverse perspectives in solving problems and planning.
- Assist children to identify their own and others' strengths and talents and use those for the benefit of the group.
- Set expectations for behaviour that are reasonable. Enforce limits and encourage desirable behaviour with firmness, but also with gentleness and empathy.
- Assist children to identify others' needs and feelings.
- Encourage children to exhibit kindness and helping behaviour towards others.
- Encourage children to empathise with others.
- Encourage alternative means of expressing feelings or ideas – through visual means, through words, through movement.
- Pose problems and dilemmas that lend themselves to creative problem solving.
- Display and use a variety of visual art and music in the children's service.
- Invite creative people from the community – for example, poets, writers, artists, sculptors, musicians, and dancers — to share their abilities with the children's service community.

THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL CHILD

- Ensure that the child is exposed to beautiful objects.
- Talk about meaningful experiences in the lives of human beings – birth, death, rituals and celebrations, for example – in ways that are appropriate to the interests of the children.
- Include symbols and acknowledgments of spirituality in the children's experience, as appropriate.

THE FEELING CHILD

- Validate and label children's feelings as they are expressed.
- Talk about feelings, as expressed in the group, in books, in pictures.
- Assist children to identify their own feelings and to learn appropriate ways of expressing them.

THE CREATIVE CHILD

- Encourage innovation and self-expression.
- Promote collaboration and group projects.
- Encouraging sensory play and exploration of expressive materials.
- Emphasise the process of expression, with less emphasis on the product or result.
- Provide free access to expressive materials appropriate to the age group.
- Acknowledge and celebrate creativity in its many forms.

Achievable desirable outcomes

Outcomes in the Framework are expressed in broad terms and are not emphasised to the extent that they are in many traditional curriculum frameworks. This is in large part because of the focus in the Framework on provisions, that is, on what professionals do and on the assertion that children will often achieve in unexpected and unimagined ways. The open nature of the Framework, however, does not preclude professionals deciding on quite specific outcomes or intended results for an individual child or a group of children, so long as these support and do not interfere with carrying out the major obligations in the Framework. In other words, competent professionals will inevitably have outcomes toward which they will work. These will be short, medium, and long-term desired outcomes.

Some will be for individual children, some for several children, and others for all children. A word of caution however: an over-emphasis on outcomes, particularly very specific ones, can easily result in a narrowing of focus and therefore of possibilities and opportunities provided for children. An emphasis on specific achievements can result in putting pressure on the child to move on to new challenges, denying the child the opportunity to savor success and the feelings of satisfaction that go with having mastered a challenge.

A statement of outcomes that is particularly compatible with this Framework is *The New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Te Whariki* (Appendix 2).

Professionals working in children's services work with a sense of purpose. Much of what has been written is about what guides and motivates professionals in their practice. Clarity about the results or impact of the provisions adults make in children's services is important. Outcomes are derived from professionals' knowledge of development, their understanding of individual children and their strengths, interests, and potential, the nature of the service in which they work and the provisions it can offer, and the wisdom and aspirations of parents and the community. Combining these perspectives into achievable outcomes for children is a particular challenge.

However, a general list of qualities desired for children within this Framework follows. These are the qualities that support living fully and contributing in a positive way to the community. The qualities below are not something children "acquire" in early childhood. Rather, pre-dispositions to many of these qualities exist from birth, and they remain important throughout life. This Framework is premised on the notion that children are predisposed to move in these directions, and the role of significant adults in their lives is to encourage and support their movement. However, there are many choice points along the

way, and the adult contributes options or possibilities that the child alone may not see, supports the child's choices, assists them, in fact accompanies them in their learning.

The list that follows comes out of Chapter 2: The Child. Obviously, the achievement of these outcomes depends on age and developmental level. The emphasis in this document on commonalities across the age span of children under school starting age precludes specific outcomes, as those are necessarily developmentally related. The wording of the outcomes below is in most cases in terms of a process in which the child is engaged. For many of these, the process is life-long, and it would be expected of course that a child approaching five years of age will be further along in the process than a younger child.

SENSE OF SELF

The child is developing:

- An awareness of their uniqueness and what contributes to that
- A sense of curiosity, desire for challenge, and joy in learning and achieving
- A view of self as a competent, creative, and capable communicators
- An appreciation of her or his own strengths
- Feelings of belonging to and pride in their culture and their family
- Broad inclusive notions rather than restrictive ones of what it means to be male or female
- A view of self as powerful and effective
- Growing ability to assert him- or herself appropriately and at the same time appreciation of the rights of others
- Confidence to ask questions and seek help
- A sense of belonging to the community and contributing to it

- An appreciation of what it means to be an Australian
- An ability to add to and alter the picture they and others have of themselves, by taking reasonable risks, meeting new challenges, and having new experiences and relationships
- Sufficient confidence and resilience to persevere in the face of obstacles and not be devastated by lack of success.

THE COMMUNICATING CHILD

The child is developing:

- The ability to seek and understand information, express opinions, convey feelings effectively
- Skills to communicate freely and effectively with peers and adults in familiar situations
- An increasing ability to use and understand non-verbal communication
- Pleasure in playing with language through rhyming, making up words and sounds, and telling stories
- Recognition and valuing of a range of kinds of literature
- An appreciation of literacy and numeracy as invaluable means of making meaning in the world
- Understandings and skills needed to learn to read and write.

THE THINKING, INVESTIGATING, EXPLORING, PROBLEM SOLVING CHILD

The child is developing:

- Increasing understanding of the world and pleasure in learning and problem solving
- An active approach to learning and problem solving
- Skills to use other people to support their learning
- Delight in self-discovery and exploration

THE HEALTHY, ACTIVE, PHYSICAL CHILD

The child is developing:

- Confidence and skills in using the body
- Daily living habits, understandings and skills that support health and well-being.

THE SOCIAL CHILD

The child is developing:

- Familiarity with and a sense of belonging to the larger community
- Skills in interacting with adults and other children
- Appreciation of others and the benefits of collaboration
- The ability to function as a member of a group, including skills of negotiating, leading, following, conflict resolutions, appropriate assertiveness
- Increasing empathy, caring, a sense of justice, appreciation of the worth of all people
- Comfort with diversity
- A sense of fairness, the courage to work to eradicate injustice and racism
- The capacity to control behaviour from within and to be motivated primarily by care and respect for self, others and the environment.

THE FEELING CHILD

The child is developing:

- The ability to recognise and accept their own feelings
- The ability to express feelings appropriately and to judge the impact of behaviour on others
- The ability to read other people's feelings and situations.

THE CREATIVE CHILD

The child is developing:

- The capacity to express ideas using a range of media
- Understanding that some problems do not have an easy solution
- Recognition that many problems have a number of good solutions
- Appreciation of the individuality and diversity in approaches and solutions
- Realisation that working creatively and collaboratively to find solutions is an enjoyable activity.

THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL CHILD

The child is developing:

- Respect for and enjoyment of the natural environment and living things
- Appreciation of beauty in its many manifestations.

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION

1. Look at other resource material and find alternative ways of categorising children's experiences. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
2. Do you agree with the statement that almost anything a child brings to the service is suitable content to deal with in some way? Why or why not?
3. How do you deal with situations when children are talking about confidential family matters?
4. Regardless of the age of the children you work with, what are you doing to support emerging literacy and numeracy?
5. Discuss the implications of various attendance patterns and amounts of time spent in the service on the provisions for a child.
6. Discuss and reflect on your service's policy about holiday celebrations. What are its advantages and disadvantages?
7. Look at each of the categories of outcomes at the end of the chapter. Discuss the ways you are supporting those outcomes in your current practice. How can you improve?
8. Discuss the application of the main points in this chapter to a child with a disability.
9. Collect examples from your own practice and that of your colleagues of the main points in this chapter.