Supporting Children’s Development and Wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHC50113</th>
<th>Diploma of Early Childhood Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHCECE017</td>
<td>Foster the holistic development and wellbeing of the child in early childhood</td>
</tr>
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</table>

goodstart.edu.au

Version 1.0
Acknowledgements

This Learning Guide (textbook) is part of a set of materials produced by the Goodstart Institute of Early Learning

Authors

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Thank you to the various departments of Goodstart Early Learning who provided support as critical friends.

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Supporting Children’s Development and Wellbeing

Getting started
This is the seventh module in a series required for learners to achieve the qualifications of CHC50113: Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. The qualification that you are studying towards has a prescribed number of Units of Competency that must be completed at a successful level for you to be awarded the qualification. Each Unit of Competency includes essential outcomes, knowledge and skills that you must obtain. The Unit of Competency also describes the context and assessment conditions required for the learner to participate in. These requirements are nationally consistent.

To enhance your learning experience, Units of Competency have been clustered together to enable you to participate in a holistic professional learning program with streamlined assessment tasks and with suitable content clustered together.

In each module, the Goodstart Institute of Early Learning offers learners a number of resources to assist them with their learning, enabling students to gain the necessary knowledge and skills required for each Unit of Competency.

The Learning Guide (your textbook) contains the content needed to gain the knowledge and skills required to be a successful early childhood educator. Additionally, all of the information required to complete assessment tasks are located within this Learning Guide.

The Learning Guide is broken into several chapters, each relating to a different Unit of Competency. The presentations provided in MyPortal are a summary of the key concepts from the Learning Guide.

The self-paced learning experiences contained within this guide assist the learner to unpack the theory and literature and apply the information to their local context. These experiences will assist the learner to prepare for success with the required assessment tasks.

**Structure of the learning program**

The components of this module are:

- Learning Guide (textbook)
- Assessment Guide, and
- Professional Learning Workshop Series.

**Learning activities**

Learning activities are provided throughout this Learning Guide and in the presentations in MyPortal. These activities are designed to support you to put into practice the content and skills discussed in the relevant sections and to consider how the content is relevant to your local work/study context. These activities also support you to develop foundational skills (language, literacy, and numeracy) that are essential to role performance. While completing the experiences contained within this Learning Guide is not compulsory, we have discerned that learners who participate in the learning experiences generally achieve better outcomes in the Assessment Guide.
Assessment

It is time to complete the Assessment Guide, when you:

• thoroughly understand the information provided within the Learning Guide
• have participated in the required online workshops or on-campus activities, and
• feel confident that you are able to transfer knowledge gained from participating with course material into practice within your local community.

All assessment items are required to be completed at a successful level before learners are able to be awarded competence, and progress on to further modules.

Community of learners

Completing professional learning through blended delivery models (online, course books, etc.) can be isolating at times. It is important that you participate as an active member of our community of learners and add your thoughts, ideas, reflections, and questions to our blog on MyPortal. Because learning is a socially constructed process, participating on this learning site will help you with your learning, and will also support your peers.

Goodstart Early Learning policies, procedures and requirements

Goodstart Early Learning has provided current service policies, procedures and requirements for learners to engage with as part of their learning experience. Learners will need to use the content within these documents to gain the necessary knowledge and skills required for them to become a successful early childhood educator. Learners working or completing work placement in non-Goodstart Early Learning services are required to familiarise themselves with their local service documents. However, for the purpose of being assessed for this qualification, learners will need to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understandings of Goodstart Early Learning policies, procedures and requirements.

Academic support

Each learner is assigned to a Professional Learning Consultant (PLC). The PLC is an expert in the fields of early childhood education and adult education, and their main role includes teaching, coaching, providing advice and support to our early childhood education and care students, as well as assisting learners to prepare for assessment. Additionally, PLCs will assess learners’ performances against stated performance criteria.

Learners who need academic assistance, have questions about the course content or assessment, or wish to participate in any of the additional learning opportunities (for example, workshops) may seek the services provided by our Academic Learning Team. There are many ways to access academic support.
1. Contact your PLC directly by telephone or email.
2. Telephone Academic Support on 1800 617 455 (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm Queensland time).
3. Contact the out-of-hours telephone support on 0427 942 562 (Monday–Thursday, 5pm–8pm Queensland time).

Study days and workshops are regularly held both during working hours and out of hours at your local Institute Professional Learning Hub. A schedule of these events is available on our website.

Citations and referencing

Goodstart Institute of Early Learning uses reference style APA version 6 to cite the work of those individuals or organisations whose ideas, theories, or research have directly influenced the development of this Learning Guide. Students must also reference cited material. A referencing help tool and style guide is located on MyPortal.

Resources

Resources such as interactive learning activities, workshops, readings and templates can be downloaded from the MyPortal website.
# Chapter 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Element 1</td>
<td>Foster physical development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Element 2</td>
<td>Foster social development</td>
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<td>Element 6</td>
<td>Create an environment for holistic learning and development</td>
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</table>
This module builds upon the knowledge and skills explored in Module 7 Learning and Development from the qualification Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Learners studying this module, Module 7 from the Diploma, are encouraged to refer back to the learning materials of the earlier module while engaging in this course work. If you have not engaged in the Certificate III, you may wish to request a copy of the Learning Guide from your Professional Learning Consultant.

Understanding children’s development, learning and wellbeing is necessary foundational knowledge for all early childhood educators. This knowledge enables educators to recognise children’s development and learning, to understand why children act and behave in a certain manner and consider, in collaboration with families and community members, how best to support children’s future development, learning and wellbeing.

Growth

Growth is often confused with physical development. The two concepts are connected; however, for different parts of the body, the interconnection will be stronger than for others. To help understand the difference between the two concepts, let’s stop for a moment and consider one of your baby photos (if you do not have a baby photo consider an image from a magazine of a child when they were an infant and then as an adult). Reflect upon how you (or the image) have changed. What features, parts are the same and what is different? No matter how similar you may look, or may not look, one thing is certain, if you have developed at roughly a normal rate you will have experienced significant growth.

Growth involves changes occurring in size and proportion, fat, muscles/strength and skeletal composition. Young children grow taller, wider, and stronger.

Growth is a process where human cells divide and our bodies become bigger and stronger. Physical development is about gaining control and mastery over our body. For example, rather than having an automatic reflex, a baby learns to move his or her own hands purposefully.

Growth is needed and sometimes dependent on children’s physical development. Young children normally develop motor skills (gross and fine) and locomotive skills (crawling, walking, running). As children grow, they develop motor skills and strength. They become more competent at using fine motor and gross motor skills which allow them to engage with the world physically. For example, fine motor development allows a child to pick things up, and manipulate and use the object as part of a function, such as feeding themselves using a fork.

For obvious reasons, growth has much to do with physical development. If we do not grow, then we do not have life, or have limited function. Growth influences physical development but does not necessarily control physical development.

Here is an actual scenario to help explain this further. My cousin is small, 155 cm tall. She has always been small, influenced by genetics (our family is small, in fact I am only 153 cm tall) but there are also environmental factors that may have inhibited growth (born 3 month premature, family was in poverty in her early childhood years). Although her growth was slow and low (compared to the percentile norms: a measurement scales used in the community to monitor children’s growth), her physical development was not. She began to crawl and...
walk at a very early age and experienced sporting success throughout her primary years of schooling. Educators should recognise that although growth is part of physical development, it does not determine physical capability.

In many states and territories, children’s physical growth and development may regularly be monitored by maternal health care nurses and medical practitioners to ensure young children are developing at the approximate normal rate. Educators may also have a role to play with monitoring children’s growth. When children come together in a social environment such as an early childhood service, educators are able to gauge whether a child is underweight, small, has low muscle tone, and, through interactions with the family and discussions with other staff members, consider whether there may be a need to suggest to a family to visit a medical practitioner or maternal health care nurse.

There are features that will influence the development of physical development and growth. These can be considered as biological and environmental.

**Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children**

Currently a longitudinal study is being conducted in Australia to understand the development and wellbeing of children in Australian society. Children from urban and regional / remote locations are included in the research.

Further information about the research, research questions and findings to date can be accessed from the following research web site:


**Biological and environmental influences on development**

Factors that affect development and growth of a young child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental (experience and nutrition)</th>
<th>Biological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pre and post natal care</td>
<td>• Inherited (genetics) factors including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child &amp; mother nutrition and health</td>
<td>o Culture (Europeans are often larger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities to engage in stimulating</td>
<td>framed people than some Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical, social interactions and</td>
<td>countries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td>o Gender (males are normally larger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adequate sleep</td>
<td>than females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Environment free from drugs, toxins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disease free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family and cultural practices</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
There are many reasons why young children do not thrive and develop. Some examples may include:

- malnutrition (e.g., mother not eating enough; poor milk, or not enough milk production; incorrect preparation of formula)
- poor diet (e.g., baby is given cordial or soft drink rather than fresh clean water)
- neglect;
- severe reflux
- inadequate absorption of food due to diseases or illness
- lack of physical activity
- lack of experiences and stimulation, and
- lack of play.

Two conditions which continue to threaten wellbeing are:

- obesity, and
- failure to thrive syndrome.

Obesity relates to children who measure above the 85th percentile using the body mass index (BMI). Children are considered overweight and obese, when they are above the 95th percentile.

Failure to thrive syndrome is when a baby or child’s weight falls below the 5th percentile.

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**Activity 1.1**

**Read, reflect, consider:**

Click onto the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the Royal Children’s Hospital information on Failure to Thrive: http://www.rch.org.au/clinicalguide/guideline_index/Failure_to_thrive_initial_management/

This site provides clinical advice to medical practitioners regarding failure to thrive.

Consider the factors that cause failure to thrive and think about strategies you could adopt within your service by working with your local community to reduce the risk of ‘failure to thrive’.
Some strategies that may be implemented into your service could include:

- inviting the local maternal health care nurse to visit the service and investigating opportunities of providing maternal health services from your service
- inviting breast feeding experts or breast feeding support groups to the service to provide information to families
- assessing a food bank, and
- developing relationships with parents and baby to assist parents see the beauty, uniqueness and delight of their baby.

**Activity 1.2**

**Globesity: Fat’s New Frontier**

Learners are strongly recommended, if you did not view this presentation in Module 2, to watch the following ABC Foreign Correspondence Special broadcast titled: Globesity – Fat’s New Frontier, produced by Vivien Altman & Marianne Leitch.

To access the television broadcast recording, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser:

http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2012/s3547707.htm

Please note that this is a long presentation, approximately 50 minutes in length.

This presentation highlights:

- the global shift from malnutrition to obesity
- the effects of obesity, and
- the influence of food manufacturers on low-socio-economic communities.

**Reflexes**

When babies are born they have a number of involuntary reflexes that cause the body to move in a certain manner. Reflexes are not able to be controlled and occur in response to stimuli. For instance, babies are born with the reflux to suck. If you place a finger or breast into a baby’s mouth, the baby automatically will start sucking (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009). This reflex is an involuntary primitive reflex, with the baby unable to control the movement. The reflex is designed as a survival mechanism, to ensure young babies feed.
Activity 1.3

Watch and consider

The following YouTube clip (2.13 mins) highlights the basic primitive reflexes of a very young baby.

Either click on the hyperlink below or copy the URL address into your web browser:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JVINnpZN20

Babies are tested at birth for primitive reflexes, as the absence can indicate an issue with development. Primitive reflexes disappear in the first months of life as young babies begin to learn mastery and control.

Physical development

Element 1

Foster physical development

1.1 Assess and monitor children’s physical skills and development

1.2 Plan and provide appropriate experiences and opportunities to foster each child’s fine and gross motor skills and fundamental movement skills through play

1.3 Plan and provide experiences that challenge the physical skills and abilities of children and promote physical fitness

Physical development is usually focused on three main groupings: gross motor, fine motor skills and fundamental movement skills.

Gross motor skills

Gross motor skills are the skills that incorporate the large movements and use big muscles in the body, such as whole limb movement. Gross motor skills develop from top down (e.g. head), inwards – outwards (body then fingers) (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009).

Cephalocaudal development: child gains control of the head first and then arms and legs.

Proxomodistal development: development occurs from the centre of the body and out (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009)
Figure 1.1
Babies learn to control their heads first to care for the most important organ, the brain.

Table 1.1 highlights the gross and fine motor skills children may have at certain ages. Children’s development is influenced by cultural influences, experiences, abilities and environmental factors (such as diet, healthy living, and play). Children may develop earlier or later, ‘age’ is just a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Age</th>
<th>Gross motor skills</th>
<th>Fine motor skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Holds head up</td>
<td>Reaches and grabs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Rolls over</td>
<td>Helps to hold rattle, joins in finger plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Sits with support, then without support. Stands and bears weight. May have started crawling</td>
<td>Grasps toys in hand independently. Picking things up by raking the object into the palm of the hand (palmer grasp).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 15 months</td>
<td>Shuffles on bottom, crawling with proficiency, may be walking, and may stand.</td>
<td>Making marks on paper, banging things, holding own cup, points at objects s/he finds interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 18 months</td>
<td>Walking unsteady to proficient. Pushing large toys or push toys,</td>
<td>Enjoying holding pencils in a grasp and pre-writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 -24 months</td>
<td>Throwing, jumping, beginning to kick, walks on tiptoe</td>
<td>Holds crayons and pens, often whole arm movement when drawing. Picks up small objects with pincer grasp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 year olds</td>
<td>Walking, running and changing direction and with speed, climbing, climbs stairs with alternative feet</td>
<td>Writing, drawing, threading small beads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Berk (2012); Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009); Raising Children Network (2013)

**Fine motor skills**

The term ‘fine motor’ means small muscles. Fine motor skills involve the ability to use and control the small muscles in the fingers, hand and arm to manipulate, control and use tools and resources. Fine motor control is not just connected to the hands and arms, fine motor skills also are required for hand-eye coordination with vision. Unlike other areas of development, fine motor development is dependent on growth. The hand, wrist, ankle and foot have fewer bones at birth than in adulthood; therefore, fine motor development develops at a slightly different time to that of gross motor development (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009).
Figure: 1.2
The physical skills needed for handwriting and drawing include:

- postural control and shoulder stability
- wrist extension
- hand and finger coordination
- visual motor control
- bilateral integration
- spatial awareness, and
- kinaesthetic awareness.

Children will hold items, such as pencils in a variety of ways as they are developing their skills and acquiring strength. Children may use a number of different grips until they master the apparatus.

Figure 1.3 Palmer supinate grip or fisted grip

Figure 1.4 Digital pronate grip

Figure 1.5 Static tripod grip

Many children write quite competently with this grip.

Figure 1.6 Dynamic or three point tripod grip

This is the grip that most children are encouraged to use in schools as this grip provides the best position for writing (comfort), uses less energy than other grips and promotes accuracy.
Today, educators working with children should demonstrate to children and encourage them to hold their pencil correctly so it is comfortable. In the era of technology – typing and the use of the index finger for swiping (IPads), holding a pencil in the ‘correct way’ no longer has the importance or receives the attention that it once did.

### Fundamental movement skills

Gross and fine motor skills are closely related to fundamental movement skills. Movement is made up of a series of patterns of gross and fine motor skills entwined with fundamental movement skills.

#### Table 1.2 Categories of movement skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of movement skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Being able to distribute weight on both legs to support body to be stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Static balance: balanced while still.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dynamic balance: balanced while moving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locomotion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Movement from one place to another e.g. running, walking, hopping, skipping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrating body movements so that they work together:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hand-eye coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bimanual coordination: use of two hands to complete a task e.g. opening a lid off a jar, holding a tennis racket with both hands to hit the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Manual dexterity: able to coordinate the actions of the hands and fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ability to use power (muscles).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Able to move the body and change direction quickly. Eg: running around the clothes line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body kinaesthetic awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Awareness of where body parts are without looking at them. Eg: Simon Says touch your nose. Playing the game statues – where you might need to copy another form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Able to understand one’s own body and the position of other objects e.g. walking through a door way without hitting your arm against the door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crossing the midline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Able to reach across the body with the arms and / or legs crossing over the opposite side of the body.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Walker, Miller and Tansey (2014, pp.106-107).
Activity 1.4

Complete documentation

Watch, notice and then document, using a documentation tool of your choice (e.g., anecdotal record, jotting or diary entry), the skills this child is using in regards to fine motor, gross motor and loco-motor skills within the vignette.

To access the vignette, click on the following hyperlink or copy the URL address into your web browser - https://vimeo.com/106355978

Password, if required: GoodStartVideo

Activity 1.5

What next:

Reflecting upon the vignette you have just watched from Activity 1.3, what assessment do you make about this child’s skill level?

What experiences do children engage in, within your service, that support fine motor and gross motor development?

What resources and toys are available that support physical development?

The child in the vignette had a particular interest in ‘balancing’. How could you extend this interest further if you were her educator?

Activity 1.6

Reflecting upon current strategies:

In your workbook, draw up at table: label one side Fine Motor, and the other side Gross Motor.

List the daily critical ritual experiences in your service that engage children in and support fine and gross motor development?
Experiences and practices to enhance physical development

Children’s physical development is enhanced when they play, dance, run, walk, climb, balance, etc.

Educators often consider physical development occurring outdoors; however, all environments can provide opportunity to enhance children’s physical development. Let us consider Activity 1.3 (on page 14). This child demonstrated an interest in balancing. This activity is a good example of a physical experience indoors. This interest could be extended indoors by visiting a local gymnastic centre and utilising some of the apparatus. Another idea is to invite a gymnast, calisthenics performer and/or ballet dancer to visit the service. They can teach the children some movements and discuss the similarities and differences of these different styles of dance/movement. Additionally, in an outdoors context, children could go on nature walks where they can walk and balance on logs. Educators in conjunction with children could create an indoor or outdoor obstacle course. This can be planned on paper or in a 3D form. Subsequently, in collaboration with the educator and other children, the plan could be transformed into reality.

Lately, there has been much media attention placed on the importance of movement for wellbeing. It is particularly important that young children are provided space and time to freely move. Table 1.2 (on page 18) highlighted a number of movement skills that are developed by young children experiencing regular movement and developing senses that support these skills. For example, the “proprioceptive sense relates to the position of our body in relation to one another” (necessary for kinaesthetic skills) and ‘the vestibular sense promotes movement and its relationships to ground’ (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009, p.91). These senses are developed through engagement in experiences that encourage children to crawl, go throw tunnels, fall, swing, dance, and even as simply as sitting on the floor. Children don’t develop these senses and skills sitting at desks or on the couch at home.

Diploma qualified educators are not required to know the names and types of developing senses discussed above. What is important is that educators understand that these senses exist and therefore value and recognise the importance of full movement in a range of environments.

Understanding the importance of movement becomes even more important for educators to consider when we consider the reality of today’s child compared to previous generations. Sadly, many children live in environments where it is not safe for them to venture outdoors due to a wide variety of reasons. In some parts of the world, this is due to war, pollution, no responsible adult available, pressures of having to stay indoors to work or complete school work and a lack of physical space. For these reasons, many children are disconnecting from nature and having reduced opportunity for testing and challenging whole body movement.

It is paramount young children have opportunity to engage in quality play both indoors and outdoors. Resources and open-ended materials need to be available for children to manipulate, allowing them the opportunity to practise, test and modify their skills and movement. Many early childhood services have traditionally had climbing forts and swings in their playgrounds. However, more educational value can be afforded by having flexible and movable A-frames, planks, ladders, ropes, and tyres. These items can provide opportunities for allow children to utilise and enact their agency to design obstacle courses in different locations with different purposes.
In Figures 1.7 and 1.8, Ruben utilises the moveable resources to construct his recycling truck. Although he does not use the obstacle course as a ‘traditional obstacle course’, he is still testing and challenging all his physical skills: climbing the A-frame, walking, bending, running to collect ‘rubbish’, carrying, lifting, pushing, and using strength while lifting and moving planks and ladders.

**Figure 1.7:** Ruben altered the obstacle course (prepared by the adults earlier) into his recycling truck.

**Figure 1.8:** Ruben climbing the ladder and then sitting and balancing on the ladder rung to drive his truck.

To support children’s development and promote physical fitness, educators must first consider the environment to determine space, resources and connections to local community. Educators also need to consider children’s interests, abilities and the children who will be utilising the space, for instance do all children utilise this outdoor play space or is the area just for older children? When planning and implementing experiences that promote children’s physical development and physical fitness consider opportunities for:

- socio-dramatic play (e.g., as in Ruben’s recycling truck)
- music, movement and dance (e.g., teaching children traditional dances and allowing children to move naturally to the rhythm of music)
- construction (e.g., building cubbies, building trucks, buses)
- games with rules (e.g., soccer, cricket, duck-duck-goose, statues, games where children have developed the rules), and
- participation in energetic physical activity (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009).

Educators plan experiences with children. Educators also may plan experiences for children. Part of the planning and programming process educators engage with (addressed in Module 8) is to consider the placement of resources and equipment, the considered selection of resources, and teaching children how to use equipment and apparatus safely. Examples of this include: two people must lift the ladder; velcro straps must be placed on...
planks attaching them to A-frames; and safety mats are placed under certain pieces of equipment. Additionally, educators through the planning process must consider the abilities of the children in their group and consider where educators may need to provide extra support. This includes identifying the required type of support (physically positioned or verbal) and the type of guidance and/or encouragement needed for different children.

**Physical fitness**

Within this chapter, learners have considered:

1. the importance of movement and
2. issues associated with obesity.

Significant research is a range of fields highlights the importance of movement for people’s health and wellbeing. Furthermore, Australia is regarded as one of the fattest nations in the world, with obesity doubling in the last 20 years (Monash Obesity & Diabetes Institute, 2014).

Encouraging children to be physical and to recognise the importance of physical fitness for life-long health and wellbeing is an important message to teach our children to value and embrace.

Speaking with children about the issues of obesity and how to care for themselves through good nutrition and daily exercise and frequent movement is now part of an educator’s social responsibility.

With this last comment in mind, although we want to encourage children to be active and to participate, educators must recognise and respect children’s rights and listen to them. At times, children may not wish to participate in physical activity or to attempt a new challenge and this should be respected where possible.
Activity 1.7

Watch and consider

Watch the following video which is part of the Early Childhood Australia PLP resources.

To access the video click on the following link or copy the URL address into your web browser - https://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=144186958986803

This young child is completing a jumping experience (repetition of experiences is important) from a high plank. The child needs the support of the educator and she is close by the child standing on the plank. However, when the educator turns to assist another child, the child on the plank is left 'hanging'.

This experience is what we would consider as being outside Taj’s Zone of Proximal Development. Without the educator’s support, the child decides not to go ahead with jumping. The educator comes back to the child and re-focuses; however, Taj doesn’t want to complete the experience. The educator ‘listens’ to Taj and values her decision to change her mind. By listening to Taj and not pushing her beyond what she is ready for. The educator provides the following messages to Taj:

1. that it is ok to say no,
2. that she is listened to and respected, and
3. the educator will allow Taj the time to regain her confidence.

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009) promotes children’s learning and physical development throughout the Principles and Practices of the framework and in particular Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

“Physical activity and attention to fine and gross motor skills provide children with the foundations for their growing independence and satisfaction in being able to do things for themselves” (DEEWR, 2009, p.30).
Social development

Element 2

Foster social development

2.1 Assess and monitor children's social skills and development

2.2 Plan and provide opportunities for different forms of social interaction between children during play with respect for each child’s interests, goals and development stage

2.3 Create and provide opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways in group discussions and shared decision making

2.4 Structure experiences in a way that promotes cooperation and conflict resolution

2.5 Promote a sense of community within the service

2.6 Arrange the environment to encourage interactions between children, as well as accommodating a child’s need for privacy, solitude or quiet

2.7 Provide opportunities for children to investigate ethical issues relevant to their lives and their communities

Social development in the early years

Our human world is made up of social circles. We live, play and work in social environments where people interact and engage with each other. Social development is concerned with learning to live with others in our social world.

Children begin to develop socially as soon as they are born and interact with others. Children learn through the engagement with others the accepted ‘social norm’. These social norms will, of course, be culturally specific and what might be acceptable in one community may not necessarily be accepted in another. Additionally, gender, socio-economic status and family beliefs, values and customs will influence children’s social development.

Play is an important element of social development. Through play, children can both observe and be observed playing-out their thinking and ideas of events they have witnessed or experienced in society.
Figure: 1.9 Children learn the social expectations of each context. At an early childhood service, children learn that they are part of small and large groups and there are certain rules that are required to be followed. The educator is encouraging the children to come together in the playground and using communication signals to support the children to stop talking and to listen so that she can provide them with some information about the pending arrival of morning tea.

Activity 1.8

Watch and consider

If you have not watched the NAPCAN Children See Children Do video, then consider watching it. This video that was aired on television in 2013.

To access the video click on the following link or copy the URL address into your web browser - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOrGs84qG_w#t=40

Consider:

- What sort of role model are you to children?
- What role models do children have in their lives?
- Who are children from your service learning their social skills from?

System theories

Throughout this qualification, learners have considered the ideas put forward by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1995). This theory was discussed in Module 6. His ecological systems theory considered the child as developing within a complex social system, with learning and development influenced by the relationships, services and surrounding environments and two-way interactions occurring between these and the child.

Figure: 1.10 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System theory
Activity 1.9

Practical task
Consider the Ecological System Theory.
Think about your own childhood.

- What elements of the Ecological System Theory do you believe influenced and supported your social development?
- How could your service support children’s social development?
- What other elements of the systems are influencing children you work with?

Figure 1.11: Children often need to be supported with how to ‘get on with others’, how to negotiate and express their rights (my turn), and how to play with others. Teaching children how to make friends and how to keep friends are social skills that are often taught in early childhood education and care services.

Influences that affect social development

There are a number of factors that may influence our social development. Remember that all children are unique, with different personalities, attitudes and dispositions. Something that may affect one child’s social development may not necessarily affect another. Factors that may influence include: family, socio-economic status, family structure, illness and trauma, attendance to early childhood education and care and the quality of that experience, gender, race and culture, and social policy. These will briefly be explained in the following.

Family

The number of children in a family and the position of the child within the family can influence social development. One example is the ‘only child’ who does not have siblings and, therefore, does not need to compete for resources with another child may find relating with other peers in other settings difficult at first. Another example is the youngest child from a large family who may have either well developed social skills, because the child has had to socially mature quickly to be able to have a successful role in the family or the opposite.
where the child is socially immature because the child is used to be treated like the ‘baby’ of the family with the child having everything done for him or her.

Parenting style varies and also may influence a child’s social development. At one end of the spectrum, a child who has parents with a ‘laissez affair’ parenting style may have no boundaries and find it difficult in settings where boundaries are in place. While at the other end of the spectrum, a child who has parents with an authoritarian style of parenting (controlling parents) may find making choices in social situations difficult.

### Activity 1.10

**Listening to families thoughts:**

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to watch a short video (1.49 mins) -

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/social_development_video.html

In this video, parents share stories about their children’s socialising and social development through regular contact with other children and adults. Through socialising, children develop confidence and important social skills such as teamwork and sharing.

*Have you asked your families what they think about children’s opportunity for social development?*

Consider if families value early childhood education and care and recognise the importance for children’s development, then they can become the service’s biggest advocate in the local community. We need families championing for early childhood so that politicians listen to voters and ensure that there are quality early childhood services for all children!

### Socio-economic

Poverty affects all areas of development. Living in poverty is associated with higher levels of violence, crime with effects on a child’s mental health, physical development and academic achievement (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009; Shonkoff, 2011).

### Divorce and re-marriage

Children react to divorce in different ways and the manner in which families separate affects the child (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams; 2009).

### Access to early childhood education and care

The EPPE longitudinal study in the United Kingdom found that children who attended Preschool had higher academic success in schools than children who had not had an early childhood experience (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004).
Influences of gender

Across the world, females and males are expected to act in certain ways. In Australia, females and males enjoy social policies that encourage equality. However, this is not the case in all countries throughout the world. For instance, in Saudi Arabia women are not permitted to attend sports events and functions. In Australia, attendance at sporting events is a major social outing for many people, including females.

Often educators complain that family members send young children to the service in inappropriate outfits or expensive clothes which restricts the opportunity to participate in certain experiences and may, in turn, limit the social opportunities children have within an early childhood education and care service.

Educators are encouraged to talk with families about how clothing can limit children’s opportunity to engage in all learning experiences within the service. Chatting to families, in a private area or over a cup of coffee where educators can talk with families to establish the reason for their decisions or concerns can help to negotiate a solution. For example, families may be able to bring a change of clothes to the service which the children change into and play for the day and then change back of it, in preparation to go home.

Influences of race and culture

Johnston & Nahmad-Williams (2009) indicate that “race and culture can affect a child’s view of society and their social development as they see themselves as outside or inside the dominant culture of the society in which they live” (p.227). This is often played out in the playground as children ‘test’ their theories of what they may have observed in the media or through other experiences. Children are often excluded by other children from certain areas of the playground due to their gender, culture and skin tone. Educators have a responsibility to support children in understanding and valuing difference and helping children to live by respectful and friendly ways.

Influences of social policy and environment

If we turn on the television and watch the news, the social policies that politicians and community members often argue about has an indirect effect on young children. At the time of writing this module, access to child care is being hotly debated. With ‘working’ families considered eligible to access early childhood education and care. Furthermore, disability pensions are at risk of being reduced and Australian serviceman have just been sent overseas to fight in the Middle East. These policies influence children and families and in
turn affect children’s social development. The following examines the impact of these policies on children’s development.

If early childhood education and care funding is only available to children whose families are working, non-working families, including families from vulnerable circumstances, may have their child denied the opportunity to ‘socialise’ and play with other children. As noted above, The EPPE research study from the United Kingdom (Sylva et al., 2004) found that children who engaged in quality early childhood experiences provided by a university teacher did better academically than children who had not participated in an early childhood program.

Reduction in disability pensions could force further hardship on families and restrict children’s access into the community due to costs and family tension.

Mothers or fathers leaving to go overseas for active duty put added strain on their families. Associated increases in mental health concerns may affect children’s social development.

**Bereavement and trauma**
Trauma affects all people, children included. Trauma can include children becoming withdrawn and anti-social, and may also affect their emotional development.

**Illness**
Children who take on the role of the carer for sick parents or for family members with disabilities may miss out on important social opportunities of their own development.

**Figure 1.13:** Children may be affected by loss and trauma.

During the 2011 Brisbane floods, many Brisbane residents were evacuated from their homes and lost all of their possessions. Families were in shock and were facing hardship and trauma. The early childhood community came together through ‘Save the Children’ to offer Child Friendly Spaces. These play spaces helped children to gain some normality in a state of crisis. The benefits of child friendly spaces provide therapeutic support to children post trauma but support with socialisation. To read more, visit:

Activity 1.11

Examine the latest media/news reports.

What are some policies and or issues that have been discussed within the Australian media over the last month that would affect a child’s social development?

Experiences and practices to enhance social development

Early childhood educators support the social development of young children by encouraging and fostering positive social attitudes and behaviours. Social attitudes include cooperation, collaboration, responsibility, independence and tolerance (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams; 2009). These attitudes and behaviours are explored through play and fostered by child-adult interactions, often with educators guiding and challenging ideas and misconceptions that children may have.

Table 1.3 Promoting social development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s age</th>
<th>Experiences promoting social development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Babies</strong></td>
<td>Being attentive to children involves:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• looking at babies when they are being fed, spoken and listened to or engaged with;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• smiling at baby, looking in the mirror together, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• engaging in games such as peek-a-boo and other finger rhymes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toddlers</strong></td>
<td>Creating opportunities for social interactions may include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• singing songs and reading books together in small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• providing opportunities for children to play with resources alongside peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• enjoying pleasant meal times together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• having multiple copies of the same resource to enable children to learn how to share with other, thus facilitating the experience of social success, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• remaining calm and encouraging children to have-a-go and supporting toddlers when they become frustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s age</td>
<td>Experiences promoting social development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 year olds</td>
<td>Creating opportunities for social interactions (as per Toddlers), as well as the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teaching children social skills, e.g., reading books about how to make friends and discussing the strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• providing opportunities for dramatic play to allow children to role play their ideas and test theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encouraging children to play fair and have respect for each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• developing class behaviour expectations by asking children to express their ideas and thoughts as part of shared decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teaching what the service expectations looks like (role play), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• supporting play and enjoyable meal times where children are involved in situations of cooperation and conflict resolution and can be supported by the engaged educator, who can step in and assist where needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure: 1.10 Encouraging social development with Babies

Gazing into the mirror together, chatting and laughing about what can be seen.

Activity 1.12

Read and reflect

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the Zero to Three National Centre for Infants, Toddlers & Families (USA) Child Development Fact Sheets on supporting the development of social and emotional skills:


Three fact sheets are available: Birth – 12 months, 12 months – 24 months and 24 – 36 months.

• Consider the strategies suggested by the Centre.
• Does your service incorporate any of the strategies?
• What additional strategies are recommended that you could easily incorporate into your service?
Children need support to develop social skills and to support continued wellbeing by the interaction and attention of an engaged educator. Educators need to encourage opportunities for small group activities and respect times when children wish to be alone. In earlier modules (Module 3 & 5), learners have considered a number of resources (such as tepees) that allow children to feel a sense of privacy and being alone, but maintaining educator responsibility of ‘direct sight’ supervision requirements.

An early childhood education and care service has a key responsibility for working in collaboration with families and children to support the learning and development of young children. Table 1.3 (on pages 31 and 32) lists some of the experiences educators may provide or engage with to support children’s social development. Educators aim to support learning environments that encourage children to work in partnership with other children to construct new knowledge and ideas (constructivism). However, educators must remember that experiences which encourage collaborative learning and engagement are often foreign to many young children and may require educator’s assistance to support children to gain the skills of interacting in a respectful and friendly manner in group situations.

There are many elements of working collaboratively with others, including: learning to cooperate, sharing, thinking about other’s feelings (being empathetic) and rights, being present and engaged around other human beings, being polite, making friends and keeping friends.

**Figure: 1.11** Trying to support another child who was distressed after being bumped over during a chasing game

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**Activity 1.13**

**Construct a learning experience**

Consider how you would teach, through the use of puppets, the concept of sharing to two young children aged 4 years.

- How would you explain sharing?
- Consider what is involved in sharing – break the concept up into small components.
- What does the task look like in teachable parts?
- How would you now teach this to these young children?
Figure 1.12 Creating spaces for children to be alone is important in early childhood education and care services where children may spend large blocks of time. Part of social development is knowing when we want to seek the company of others, understanding when we want to be alone, being able to do this respectfully and honouring ourselves.

Figure 1.13 At times, children may create situations in play where they are alone and enjoying their own space. These children need to be supported by adults (when it is appropriate) to be able to say to others that they prefer to be alone at that point in time, and for the message to be understood and respected without other children taking the statement personally.

Activity 1.14

Answer the Case Study questions

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the new Connections resource by Hunter Institute of Mental Health - http://www.himh.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/11258/CONNECTIONS-WEB-FINAL.pdf

Go to page 44. Read the case study on Ben.

This section within Connections is on social & emotional wellbeing. Social development and emotional development are often combined and discussed together as social and emotional development and or wellbeing because of their natural interconnectedness.

Answer the questions associated with the case study on Ben.

Building a sense of community

Children learn through developing safe and respectful relationships with others. With and alongside of others, children explore, engage and interact and have rich conversations
about their ideas, theories and understandings about the world. The construction of knowledge in this way (known as constructivism) is supported by the theories of Vygotsky and emphasised by his theory of Zone of Proximal Development (1930-1935) (Berk & Winsler, 1995) (which will be explored again in this module within the section on cognition).

Two important aspects of children’s ‘belonging, being and becoming’ is the importance of children having a sense of belonging and learning how their own behaviours and actions affect themselves and others. Educators have a key responsibility to support children in both these areas.

Developing a sense of belonging, includes recognising that children are active members of their community. To support a child to feel a ‘sense of belonging’, includes children’s family and community being valued and recognised within the service. Once again, learners are encouraged to consider the Bronfenbrenner’s (1995) Ecological System Theory and consider how the service considers and touches the systems of the child.

Developing a service sense of community involves thinking through the service values and philosophy, considering how your room is set up, and reflecting upon the modes of communication to families and children, welcoming gestures (signs, open-door policy, lounge for families, community boards), and critical rituals. Building a sense of community also requires attention to knowing your service and making strong connections with your local community. The questions in Activity 1.12 will support you to identify how well you know or do not know your local area.

Activity 1.15

Community audit

Walk around your service and identify and list all the resources, artefacts and or experiences that encourage families and children to feel welcome and a sense of belonging within the service.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does each room have photographs of children and their families which are at children’s reach?
- Who are the local services, industries, religions that are based in our local locality?
- How are these local community services, industries, religions (assets) reflected in our service? How do we make connection with them? Do they know that we exist?
- How are local elders honoured within your room?
- How are the cultural groups within your local community reflected in your room?
- When families walk into the service, how do you make them feel as though they are part of the service family too?
National Quality Standard 5.2

The Guide to the National Quality Standards (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2013) Standard 5.2 states that “each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults” (p.129).

As a visiting early childhood consultant (many moons ago), I visited an Aboriginal community in outback Queensland. The teacher had pictures of traffic lights, buses, snow (because it was winter) displayed around the room. Children had no connection to these city images and they had no understanding of them. Within this service, there was no connection to the local community.

Building a sense of community means ensuring not only that the community is reflected within the service, but the service is involved in the community. The service can participate in community events or be involved in topics of interest regarding the community. For instance, children can be involved in investigating ethical issues relevant in their local community.

Case study

An early childhood education and care service based on university grounds regularly found an abandoned grocery trolley at the front gate. The children asked the educator of the reason for this and were concerned that the shopping trolley was not at its correct home. On one occasion, the educator decided to involve the children in returning the trolley.

The educator asked the children to write stories and to explain their ideas about why the trolley had decided to visit the service. There were lots of theories for the visit. The educator then took the children on the footpath to have a closer inspection of the trolley. The teacher read to the children that the trolley belonged to Woolworths (indicating the signage on the trolley).

Some of the children decided that the trolley was lost and that they needed to call Woolworths to let them know. The children and educator searched the internet information about Woolworths and abandoned trolleys. One of the children, with the guidance of the educator, telephoned the abandoned trolley hotline and spoke with somebody and made a report about the abandoned trolley. The employee explained to the kindy-aged child that people steal the trolleys (taking them outside the shopping centre) and that they would come and collect it the next day. The Woolworths employee also invited the children to visit the local Woolworths.
The next day, the children watched the trolley get collected and the local store manager came to the service to visit the children and thank them. He too invited the children to the store. Two weeks later, an excursion to the local Woolworths occurred. The children learnt all about trolleys, the costs, and the number of trolleys stolen; and, at the same time, made strong community partnerships.

On reflection, the children decided to write a letter to the university newspaper and university residential colleges informing students of the problem of stealing trolleys and how much it costs, which is in turn passed down to consumers. The children’s letter was published and, being a university, a journalist came to the service to interview the children.

Through this authentic social civic experience, the children made strong connections with the local community. Not only did they build community but a range of small group activities emerged from within the service based on the information relating to the trolley project. Children chatted with each other about all sorts of things relating to the shopping trolley experience.

**Activity 1.16**

Watch, document and assess social development

Click on the following hyperlink to access the vignette or copy the URL address and paste into your web browser - https://vimeo.com/108979063

Password, if required: GoodStartVideo

Watch the interaction between Chelsea and the other children.

Using a jotting, document Chelsea’s engagement with the other children regarding social development.
# Emotional development

## Element 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foster emotional development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Assess and monitor children’s emotional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Create and provide opportunities for children to experience individual strengths and successes during play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Plan and provide opportunities through play that challenge children’s emerging skills and capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Provide opportunities for children to engage independently with tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Create opportunities for children to explore self-image and identity through play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Provide opportunities for children to release feelings and express emotions through suitable experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Emotional development in the early years

Sadly, almost 1 in 5 Australian’s, 20% of the population will experience mental illness in a twelve month period (Sane Australia, 2014). Furthermore, youth suicide is the leading cause of deaths of young people in Australia (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2014). Young children are not immune to mental health concerns (not having wellbeing). Educators must understand social and emotional development and implement strategies within their service that foster good mental health and are alert to indicators and risk factors that flag to them children who may require additional support to enable them to enjoy healthy wellbeing.

In the last section it was highlighted to learners that emotional development is often considered in combination with social development, termed ‘social and emotional development’, due to the interconnection between both elements. Emotional development and skills to express emotions appropriately are essential skills for all human beings to enable them to maintain good mental health.

The importance of young children gaining good social and emotional development leading to life-long wellbeing is well recognised and a number of government funded initiatives currently exist to support educators and families to support children’s development in this area.
Public initiatives supporting social and emotional development, wellbeing (mental health)

Current programs include:


What is emotional development? What are emotions?

Emotions are an expression of feelings. Emotions include happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation / anxiety, guilt, shame pride (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

When we are happy, we normally act in a certain way. When we are sad, we usually act in a different way. Emotions occur through our body reacting (biologically) due to an environmental and/or social experience (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009).

Young babies are born with the ability to express simple emotions. When they are happy, they smile and their eyes light up. When they are unhappy/sad, angry or fearful, they cry and screw their face up. Family members are often able to listen to the tone of a baby’s cry and understand the needs of the child.

Table 1.4 First appearance of basic emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Happiness | Smile from birth  
Social smile: 6-10 weeks  
Laugh: 3 – 4 months |
| Anger | General distress from birth  
Anger: 4-6 months |
| Sadness | Distress to ‘still face’: 2-7 months |
| Fear | First fears: 6-12 months Stranger Anxiety: 8-12 months |
Activity 1.17

Still Face Experiment

Watch and listen to the following You Tube Clip by Edward Tronick from the Centre for Developing Child.

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to watch the short YouTube clip -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0

Professor Tronick highlights that very young children do engage socially and emotionally with others. The experiment shows the distress a child experiences (from approximately 2-7 months) if s/he does not receive visual cues from another person.

This experiment informs us that young babies do in fact seek engagement with other people. Children need this social interaction with other people to form strong attachments, build relationships, learn to regulate emotions and develop communication skills.

In today’s society, of concern is the number of devices such as televisions, mobile telephones, iPads, that now distract family members from engaging with a child and, in fact, are creating their own ‘still face’ situations without realising the consequence.

Functions of emotions

Table 1.5: Functions of emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Leads to learning essential skills for survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Affect behaviour of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulate our own behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Influence wellbeing and growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress, related to disease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1.6: Emotional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you might observe</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Babies (b-2 yrs)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment behaviours (seeking contact with [educator] when afraid, hurt, or hungry; being sufficiently relaxed in the presence of [educator] to explore the environment).</td>
<td>Some children have multiple attachments and move easily from one [educator] to another, whereas other children may have a single close attachment and strongly protest separation from this person.</td>
<td>Model productive emotional expressions, and remain calm when babies and toddlers cry and shout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distress at separation from parent or educator.</td>
<td>Some cultures encourage small children to express all their feelings, including anger and sadness. Other cultures place harmony above self-expression and discourage infants and toddlers from expressing certain feelings; instead they teach restraint (Camras et al., 2006).</td>
<td>Be responsive and sensitive to the needs of infants – they are learning to trust you as you help them satisfy their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing repertoire of ways to communicate feelings; crying and smiling gradually supplemented with laughter, hand gestures, and words.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seek professional guidance when you encounter infants who appear to have serious attachment problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning ability to self soothe.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take [baby’s] separation distress seriously, and provide them with lots of reassurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood (2-6yrs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to be close to parents when afraid, hurt or uncertain.</td>
<td>Children vary in the number of close attachments they form, the extent to which they find reassurance in these attachment figures, and their responses to strangers. Some cling tightly to [educators], others venture confidently to explore new environments and check out strangers.</td>
<td>Realise that young children may initially be cautious or fearful in a new classroom or other group, they will become more confident as they begin to form attachments to their [educators].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide variety of emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust).</td>
<td>Children vary in how they express their emotions. Some are very controlled, especially in masking anger and sadness. Others are more expressive.</td>
<td>Be patient in establishing relationships with young children; some may form attachments quickly, but others may take several weeks or months before trusting adults outside the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with and use of labels for basic emotions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach appropriate ways of handling negative emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergence of self-conscious emotions (e.g., pride, guilt)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage children ‘to use their words’ rather than push or hit when angry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Copied from: McDevitt, Ormrod, Cupit, Chandler & Aloa, 2013, p. 486)
Table 1.7 Erikson’s Emotional Stages of Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 1 years</td>
<td>Trust versus mistrust</td>
<td>To establish a trusting relationship with a primary caregiver, to develop trust in self, others and the world as a place to get our needs met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>Autonomy versus shame &amp; doubt</td>
<td>To strive for independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 years</td>
<td>Initiative versus guilt</td>
<td>To plan and carry out activities and learn society’s boundaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Eric Erickson as cited in McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010, p. 405).

Eric Erickson (1902-1994) (as cited in McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010) put forward a theory of emotional development. He proposed three fundamental areas for emotional development that early childhood educators are focused on. They are:

- trust vs. mistrust stage
- autonomy vs. shame and doubt
- initiative vs. guilt.

**Trust versus mistrust**

Children learn to trust adults through the interactions with them. Responsive and attentive parents, family members and educators demonstrate to children that they are lovable, important and safe and secure. Babies who are left to cry, not tended too, loved or put ‘at risk’ or harmed learn mistrust at an early stage of life and may lead to lifelong emotional issues, stress and mental health concerns. Trust vs. mistrust is critical. This is the period of a person’s life when children develop self-confidence and trust in the world or whether children will develop fear, uncertainty, and hopelessness.

**Activity 1.18**

**Critical reflection:**

What actions by the parent or educators would help to build trust with a young child?

Why would a parent be unresponsive to a baby?

What could you do to support a parent to develop a more trusting relationship with their baby?
Trust is created between adults and baby when: bottles are received as requested by the child; a parent responds when the baby cries, and a parent gives the baby love and attention. When a parent is unresponsive to a child, this creates mistrust. This may be due to a number of reasons including postnatal depression, drugs, domestic violence, sick, disabilities, work pressures or authoritarian parenting styles.

Supporting family members to understand the importance of being responsive to babies is important. There is much conflicting advice in the public forum, often confusing family members about what they should do. Providing scientific information about brain development and attachment theory helps dispel the myths.

Some families may require additional help to support them in bonding with their baby, and to enable them to be responsive to the child. Without judgement, it is important to try to find the best community support for the family. An audit of local community services in your local region (which was encouraged in Activity 1.12) may provide opportunity for the service to develop relationships with the community agency and in turn get access to support services for families when the need arises.

**Autonomy versus shame**

As children develop, they realise their own abilities and want to test these, explore these and enact their own agency. Autonomy vs. shame is the stage where children begin to want to do everything for themselves. Children who aren’t provided with and encouraged during this exploration and who may not be provided with experiences or treated harshly will develop shame and have doubts about themselves. Children thrive when they are encouraged to ‘have-a-go’, provided opportunity for agency and independency, while at the same time are supported to maintain safety and wellbeing.

**Initiative versus guilt**

Emotional conflict arises during this stage when energy is directed constructively and is valued by others or, conversely, when it is non-productive and rejected. Opportunities that facilitate the development of initiative include:

• putting plans and actions in place
• attempting to master new skills and goals
• striving to gain new information, and
• figuring out ways to maintain their behaviour within bounds considered appropriate by society.

**Attachment**

Babies form attachments with the significant people in their lives. Early bonding is considered a biological origin, because babies need adults to care for them for survival. This survival mechanism is believed to occur soon after birth (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009).
Activity 1.19

Myth Busters
Click onto the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access this one page flyer about ‘Building strong attachments for you and the baby!’ -

The effects of maternal deprivation on attachment and future emotional development were studied by John Bowlby (1969, as cited in Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009) and he concluded that attachment was essential for future wellbeing. This need of the child for closeness, security, a sense of feeling protected and a desire to be safe lead to a number of attachment behaviours. Attachment behaviour with a baby includes reaching out, smiling, and cooing. For a toddler, it might look like the child clinging to a parent, following a parent, or not wanting to leave a parent’s side. For an older child, it may include going out into the environment but looking back at the parent (secure base) to gain confidence and/or to ensure that the parent understands what the child is doing and is comfortable for the child to do so. In the best situations, attachment behaviours become linked with strong positive feelings between child and adult and the ‘dependent behaviours’ demonstrated at first lead to independency.

Activity 1.20

Download (free) and read...
Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access this free Early Childhood Australia Research in Practice Series -
This is an excellent resource explaining the ‘Circle of Security’. Look at page 2 which shows a diagram of this model.
List what are the underlying needs of a child for exploration and consider what strategies you might use within your teaching practice to support implementation of this model within your service.
Contemporary thinking acknowledges the importance of attachment; however, some of the ideas have been challenged, such as the idea that attachment was only possible with the mother. It is now understood that young children can securely attach to a number of significant adults in their lives such as mother, father, grandmother and educator.

Secure attachments in early childhood education and care are thought to have an important effect on later development. Research from the EPPE study (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden & Bell, 2002) highlighted having consistent educators as an important component of quality care and that this is required to enhance children's learning.

A secure attachment is characterised by a child’s ability to use his or her significant other (i.e., parent/educator) as a source of comfort and a secure base from which to leave and explore. When the child feels confident in the parent’s availability, s/he will be ready to explore and play in the world. An insecure attachment is characterised by the child’s inability to use his or her ‘significant other’ as a secure base. This arises in situations such as when the child leaves the parent’s side and the parent disappears or goes off and becomes unavailable to the child.

Modern attachment research has built upon the foundations of Bowlby and Ainsworth. Meins, Fernyhough, Fradley and Tuckey (2001) researched attachment security and noted that maternal sensitivity to a child influenced children’s behaviour. They constructed the notion of ‘mind-mindedness’ highlighting its importance in developing secure attachment relationships. They proposed to develop strong and secure attachments, educators must give attention to the child, be attentive to the child’s thinking and feelings, see things from the child’s perspective and be able to communicate this to the child.

Meanwhile, factors that inhibit the development of attachment include:

- educator turn-over, when the educator has formed an attachment to the child
- time with different educators, and
- lack of knowledge and skills of educator (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009).
Experiences and practices to enhance emotional development

Emotional skills development is about learning how to self-regulate and to express our emotions in the appropriate manner for the context, often referred to as emotional intelligence.

**Emotional Intelligence: Scenario**

A scenario to support learner’s consideration of the concept of emotional intelligence follows:

A two year old child in a grocery store throws a huge tantrum. She screams and throws herself on the floor crying and kicking because Mum closed the fridge door in the frozen foods section and the child wanted to complete this task.

As an adult observing this situation, we recognise that the reaction is not uncommon for this child’s level of development and low emotional intelligence and we sympathise (hopefully) with the parent. On the other hand, if we witnessed an older child react in this manner, we would be concerned. We expect older children to have a high degree of emotional intelligence.

**Activity 1.22**

**Read and reflect**

Please read the following reading:

Chapter 1: Why we hold a crying baby: Attachment and exploration, pp. 5 – 34.


The reading is available in MyPortal and on the Goodstart institute website.

After reading Chapter 1, consider what the practices are within your service about picking up crying babies.

Control crying and ignoring crying babies is not a practice that is supported at Goodstart Early Learning. Not only does this practice disregard Children’s Rights ( UNCRC), in particular children being listened too, but this reading also highlights why it is not acceptable practice from an attachment perspective.

Describe how you would use this knowledge to inform an educator in your service about the importance of picking up crying children and why educators can no longer ignore children.

Emotional development begins with developing a positive self-identity. To achieve positive self-identity, children need to be supported through the transition from home to the service. In addition, children, their families and community need to be reflected and present in the
service community in order to achieve ‘a sense of belonging’. A sense of belonging is established when:

- a classroom culture is created where all children and adults feel valued, respected, listened to and their opinions taken seriously
- educators spend focused time with each child
- diversity and differences is addressed positively
- family involvement is encouraged in the service, and
- ties are established with the local community.

Emotional development also is encouraged by educators:

- modelling and enacting caring behaviour
- labelling people’s feelings
- teaching children about feelings
- being warm, responsive and attentive to children
- understanding children’s behaviours, including that temper tantrums are often a normal part of learning
- setting clear, consistent and fair boundaries and expectations, and
- supporting children with the language skills to express to others their feelings (e.g., ‘I feel sad when you….’) (Epstein, 2009).

**Goodstart Institute of Early Learning Workshops**

Due to the importance of children’s development of social and emotional skills and of good wellbeing, a number of professional learning experiences (workshops) have been developed by the Institute to further support learners with their understanding of social and emotional wellbeing and / or to extend learning further. Professional learning opportunities include:

- Attachment in the early years: Supporting social and emotional wellbeing
- Connecting and respecting: Social and emotional wellbeing children birth to 2 years
- Teaching feelings, and
- Purposeful interactions to build relationships with children.

Please refer to the Professional Learning Calendar on MyPortal for further information.
Figure 1.14: Resources to support emotional development.

There are many resources, toys and games educators can develop or purchase to use with children to support their understanding of their feeling world. Participating in games such as ‘Simon says’ (even more effective when this is used in conjunction with mirrors located around the room) where the educator calls out an emotion and the children need to show a ‘sad face’ or a happy face helps children to recognise what this looks like on other people, and what it looks like on them. The game to the left, ‘Feeling & Emotions’ Snap, also encourages children to recognise the expression of emotions on others, whilst also being a memory game.

Puzzles illustrate what emotions look like and provide stimuli for discussion, as do face masks that can be purchased or made. Children can have the face masks to play with; use to describe emotions, or use as support tools such as a ‘visual clue to others’ for times when expressing oneself is difficult.
Cognitive development

Element 4

Foster cognitive development

4.1 Assess and monitor children’s cognitive skills and development

4.2 Engineer and provide opportunities for children to participate in science, numeracy and technology experiences

4.3 Plan and provide opportunities through play for children to experience the consequences of their choices, actions and ideas

4.4 Create learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning

4.5 Build opportunities for involvement in experiences that support the investigation of ideas, complex concepts and thinking, reasoning and hypothesising

4.6 Provide opportunities through play for children to explore concept development

4.7 Provide opportunities for children to both construct and take apart as a strategy for learning

4.8 Provide children with a wide range of everyday materials that they can use to create patterns and to sort, categorise, order and compare

“A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimension”


Cognition involves the development of concepts or ‘pictures in the mind’; products of reasoning which help us make sense of the world (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009). Cognition includes:

- memory
- problem solving
- logic
- intelligence
- abstraction
- reasoning
• knowledge
• understanding
• thinking, and
• Metacognition.

Cognitive development is the development of intelligence or conceptual knowledge and understanding (Johnston & Nahmad-Williams, 2009; Berk, 2012).

Table 1.7: What makes up cognitive development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition element</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>The ability to remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>The ability to form a general concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>The ability to reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>An assured belief of something that is known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>To comprehend something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>A measure of thinking ability, as measured by intelligence quotients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction</td>
<td>The ability to form a general concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>The ability to provide evidence or justification for a belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>To use or exercise the mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognition</td>
<td>To be aware and understand your own thought processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Brain development

“Everything we do, feel and say from infancy to the end of life reflects the functioning of our brain.”

Edward Melhish (2011)
Cognitive development relies on the development of the brain. Brain development occurs from conception and continues after birth. Brain development is significant in the first few years of life and is fostered by exposure to positive rich experiences which are free of stress.

**Figure: 1.15 Anatomy of the brain**

Frontal lobe: memory and intelligence
Parietal lobe: intelligence and language

To understand brain development, a number of educational short videos have been developed by leading international experts on this topic. These videos in Activity 1.18 – 1.22 are short, enjoyable and make complex concepts easy to understand.

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**Activity 1.23**

**Watch and consider: Brain development Harvard Centre for the developing child**

Click onto the following hyperlink or copy the URL address into your web browser to access the YouTube clip from Harvard Centre for the Developing Child to watch the 1.57min video on brain development -

http://www.youtube.com/v/VNNsN9Jkws?width=720&autoplay=1&rel=0&enablejsapi=1&playerapiid=ytpla yer

This video highlights the neural circuits, neurons and the parts of the brain that focus on different areas of development. The video also highlights the quality experiences needed for brain development.
Activity 1.24

Watch and consider: Brain Hero Stress Harvard Centre for the developing child
Throughout this qualification, this video has been referred to on a number of occasions. If you have not yet watched this video, it is important to do so now. Additionally you may wish to re-watch this 2.59min video.
To access the video, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL into your web browser -
The video highlights the importance of brain development and early childhood. It identifies the most important function towards healthy brain development is positive rich relationships.

Activity 1.25

Watch and consider: Toxic stress Harvard Centre for the developing child
Stress is a natural part of life. In fact a small amount of stress can be good for us. Stress creates adrenalin and may be the extra kick we need to get our assignments done. However, when stress is ongoing or extreme, it has major health risks.
Take time to watch the Harvard Centre for the Developing child video 1.52mins on Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development.
To access the video, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser -
Activity 1.26

Watch and consider: Stress Test Life at 1

The following video is from the Life at 1 ABC series taken as part of the Australian Longitudinal Research Project. This video includes commentary from Professor Margaret Sims and Professor Stephen Zubrick. This video highlights the effects of ongoing stress. Video length is 5.14mins.

To access the video, click on the following video or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser -

http://www.abc.net.au/tv/life/video/LIFEAT1.htm?program=life&pres=s2359909&story=1

Activity 1.27

Additional reading: Something to consider

This reading is not compulsory; however, learners may be interested in reading the findings of research by Sims, Guilfoyle and Parry.


This research was controversial due to the way it was conducted and for its findings. Findings concluded that a child care centre must have high quality (ratings under the former QA system) in the nursery at all times, to minimise stress to babies and that a standard any lower could be detrimental.

To access the reading, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser -


Theories of cognitive development

There are a number of leading theories on cognitive development. Theories have been put forward by Vygotsky (1962), Bruner (1960), Sternberg (1985) as well as many other theorists. In this module, we will examine the ideas of constructivist theories, Piaget (1950) and Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence (2007) (Pound, 2011). Educators use understandings about theories of cognitive development to understand children’s development. Understanding the theory and then ‘listening’ to children by observing intently will allow educators to monitor and assess children’s cognitive development and then consider the best experiences or actions to take to enhance learning and development.
Constructivist theories

Constructivist theories come from the premise that children construct their own meaning from experiences and learning. In early childhood education and care, our role as educators is to understand children’s current theories and ideas and then to plan experiences or pose provocations (open ended questions) to children that will challenge, alter or extend their current thinking to a more sophisticated view (Johnston and Nahmad-Williams). There are cognitive and social constructivist theories.

Cognitive constructivism is based on the work of Piaget (as cited in Cognitive constructivist theories: Overview of cognitive constructivism, 2000). This theory maintains that individuals construct knowledge through their experiences. Knowledge construction is deemed an individualistic, internal process. Further information about this theory is provided in the next section.

In contrast, social constructivism identifies knowledge construction as a social process (as cited in Social constructivist theories: Overview of social constructivism, 2000). Culture, society and language are key influences on learning and knowledge construction, and are fostered via interactions with more knowledgeable others.

Piaget: Cognitive constructivism

According to Piaget (1952), children are active and motivated learners, who have a natural instinct to explore the world, and are almost seeking to try to understand why it works in the way it does. Piaget claimed that as children explore the world and gain meaning, they organise their understanding into what is referred to as schemas. “A schema is a group of similar actions or thoughts that are used repeatedly in response to the environment” (as cited in McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010, p.195). These mental representations of the world (schemas) are often used to construct new knowledge and understanding (accommodation) or to use the knowledge about the schema to understand a new object (assimilation). Children will continue to re-visit experiences until such time that they have reached a state of permanent equilibrium, when they have mastered the challenge of a new schema (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

Table 1.8: Piaget’s stages of development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sensorimotor | From birth * | Trial and error experimentation – testing items to understand them eg: banging rattles, dropping keys makes a noise.  
Field-directed behaviour: intentional behaviour to get the results the child wants e.g. smiles so Mum will stay, manipulate objects with purpose eg building block towers.  
Object permanence: (begins to realise that if the ball rolls under the chair and they no longer can see it that the object still exists.  
Symbolic thought: recognition of ducks, plane, and Mum’s face. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-operational</td>
<td>Toddler</td>
<td>Language: expanding vocabulary e.g. names familiar objects&lt;br&gt;Extensive pretend play, object substitution {block as mobile phone}&lt;br&gt;Intuitive thought&lt;br&gt;Follows simple instructions&lt;br&gt;Matching, sorting classifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete operational</td>
<td>Preschool – early years of school *</td>
<td>Language: complex sentences, extensive vocabulary.&lt;br&gt;Distinction between one’s own and other’s perspectives:&lt;br&gt;Class inclusion: animals, people, objects can belong or be classified into two categories e.g. kangaroo – animal and mammal.&lt;br&gt;Conservation: begins to understand that volume, weight, number remain the same even if the shape changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal operational</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from: McDevitt, & Ormrod, 2010, p.198)

(* Although ages have been stated above, these are generalisations and children may develop skills much earlier or later depending on their abilities, culture, experiences and interests).

**Multiple intelligences**

Howard Gardner published his theory of multiple intelligences in *Frames of Mind* in 1983. He proposed that, rather than having one intelligence, there are eight distinctive intelligences, which each learner has a blend of (not just one) (Pound, 2011).

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**Activity 1.28**

**Read and consider**

Click on the hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the following resource that lists the 8 multiple intelligences –


Read about each of the intelligences and consider what intelligences you believe you may have.
Social cognition

Students have already explored the notion that ‘people’ are social creatures in the section relating to social development. Within this section, students will consider how people spend a significant amount of time thinking about social cognition, speculating about what others think and feel about them and then altering their behaviour accordingly (McDevitt et al., 2013).

Children, from a very early stage, learn that people are different to inanimate objects and that people are expressive and engaging. In their second year of life, children develop what is called theory of mind: an awareness that people have an inner, psychological life (thoughts, beliefs, feelings). This capacity to understand others’ mental state becomes more refined as children develop and become more experienced in the social world. This is often seen around 18 months when children realise that their actions influence other people’s emotions and behaviours. An example of this is when a child begins blowing kisses to impatient people cueing in a line at the local post office. Most people will go from staring blankly to smiling and then interacting with the child.

Experiences and practices to enhance cognitive development

The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) encourages educators to “provide babies and toddlers with resources that offer challenge, intrigue and surprise, support their investigations and share their enjoyment” and “provide experiences that encourage children to investigate and solve their problems” (p.35). While, the Harvard University Centre for the Developing Child (2014) states that the key to brain development is rich, positive relationships.

Educators must create an environment and culture where the child feels safe; the child and their family have a strong sense of belonging, and the educator is positively engaged and interested in the child’s learning and development.

Educators, through their use of language, can provoke children’s inquiry. The following pedagogical actions can support children’s cognitive development by:

• allowing children the time, space and ability to repeat an experience in order to test and explore their theories
• providing experiences and objects of wonder and interest
• asking open ended questions and encourage problem solving
• inviting children to use their imaginations and to think in a different way
• providing opportunities for children to learn in small group
• allowing children to explore the world to connect to sensory experiences: watering the garden (smell), digging in the garden (tactile), wind chimes (auditory), herbs (smell & taste), rattles (auditory & tactile), kitchen cooking smells (smell & taste)
• reading and exploring books with others
• singing songs and finger rhymes
• using “reflective thinking to consider why things happen and what could be learnt from these experiences” (DEEWR, 2009, p.35), and
• using simple, open ended materials that encourage and enhance play.

Activity 1.29

Consider watching and thinking about...

This key note by Ann Pelo titled ‘From teaching to thinking: Re-igniting our role as educators’ was presented at the ECA 2014 Biannual Conference held in Melbourne. The key note, which is 41.33mins in length, is an extremely high quality and enjoyable presentation of how educators listened to children and through a series of well-considered questions encouraged children to extending their thinking, to be innovative and creative and to gain new knowledge.

To access this video click on the following link or copy and paste the URL address to your web browser -

https://vimeo.com/107203058

If you watched the key note (Activity 1.26), you would have enjoyed observing how the educator worked alongside the children to encourage them to use their current understanding of the seed to construct new knowledge. Young children will assimilate, accommodate and equilibrate (refer to Piaget’s cognitive development) as they construct knowledge together through inquiry-based learning and will develop sophisticated reasoning skills and creativity.

Goodstart Institute of Early Learning Professional Learning Workshop

Students may wish to participate in the Simple Materials: Rich experiences in play professional learning experience. This workshop is available through Go-To-Training (live webinar) or MP4 through MyPortal. This workshop highlights the use of simple open-ended resources to enhance play and support development and learning.

Environments

Reggio Emilia Infant Toddler Centres and Preschools have been leading advocates encouraging educators to consider the importance of environments ‘as the third teacher’. Environments have a huge influence on the cognitive development of children.

Let us consider how environments may influence children’s learning.
Activity 1.30

Considering environments

Consider the environment in Figure 1.16.
• How does Figure 1.16 encourage learning and engagement?
• What learning is available to the children in Figure 1.16?
• How does the environment in 1.16 show the children that they are important and their learning is important?

Consider the environments in Figures 1.17 – 1.19.
• What messages are being given to children?
• Do you believe they would have an interest in engaging with this equipment?
• How do you think they might engage with the environment?

As you look around your environment, consider the following:
• How does your environment create wonder and inquiry?
• What are the colours?
• Do you notice the light? Refraction of light? Mirrors?
• What things of beauty or interest are there?
• What particular treasures capture your attention?
• What smells in the environment excite you?
• Does the environment bore you?
• Is there anything of interest for you?
• Is there something that makes you feel like you would say “Wow” and get up off your chair? If you sadly are not getting the wow factor, then it is likely that children aren’t getting it either.
Environments should encourage children’s independence. If educator’s aim to support children to be independent and to be able to enact their agency, then educators need to be mindful and intentional in the placement of resources so that children can access resources independently and know what resources are available to them, and understand where and how to store and retrieve resources.

Curtis and Carter (2003) in their beautiful book Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments, they remind educators that “children are intrigued with natural phenomena and the physical properties around them – things such as light, colour, reflection, sound, motion – the world of physics and chemistry” (p.120).

Inviting inquiry

Questions to consider:

• What natural sources of light do we have, and how could we make better use of light to explore shadows, reflections and colour refractions?
• Where does air naturally move in our room, and what could we place nearby to make magical elements of sound and motion for children?
• What more useful ways can artificial light and sounds be used to provoke children’s curiosity?
• How can we use nooks and crannies, windowsills, or countertops to display natural or scientific phenomena or treasures that might capture children’s attention and imagination?

Figure 1.21 Light boxes, torches and lamps provide opportunity for children to experiment with light. For example: Why does the torch light go bigger when you move closer to the wall?

Educators need to consider the resources in their environment and, if necessary, work with the community to include things of interest into the service. Things of beauty and interest are important to children, but are not necessarily expensive. Regular visits to second-hand shops and asking the community can lead to some beautiful open-ended resources. Additionally, consider how you can bring the natural environment in. A few indoor plants can help to soften the environment and add some clean air to the space.

Communication development

Element 5

Foster communication development

5.1 Assess and monitor children’s language skills and development

5.2 Plan and provide developmentally appropriate experiences and opportunities to foster language and literacy development through play

5.3 Create opportunities for children to listen and respond to language

5.4 Value the child’s linguistic heritage and encourage the use and acquisition of home languages

5.5 Provide opportunities for children to engage with familiar and unfamiliar culturally constructed text

5.6 Create a literacy-enriched environment including displaying home languages and Standard Australian English

5.7 Provide resources that encourage children to experiment with images and print
Communication development in the early years

Language development is influenced by the experiences we have in our lives. When children live in environments that are rich in language and literature, where families value communication and spend time with children engaged in sustained conversations, children’s communication skills flourish.

**Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators**

“From birth children communicate with others using gestures, sounds, language and assisted communication” (DEEWR, 2009, p.39).

“Children feel a sense of belonging when their language, interaction styles and ways of communicating are valued” (DEEWR, 2009, p.39).

Like most areas of development, there are a number of theoretical perspectives about language development: behaviourist, nativist, maturational, interactionist and neurobiology. Language development is complex and, as you will discover, there are differing perspectives due to there being no one fixed explanation.

In the next section, learners will examine three theoretical perspectives: nativist, interactionist, and neurobiological. It is important for educators to understand that there are different theoretical perspectives about language development. This awareness enables educators to view children’s language development through different lenses.

**Nativist Perspective**

The nativist perspective suggests that language learning occurs due to biological factors (brain development) and is an innate ability of all humans, rather than through interaction with the environment and people. Chomsky (1975) was a key contributor to this perspective and asserted that the human brain was structured to learn and use language, which he referred to as language acquisition device (LAD). It is believed that language has a ‘critical period’ in which children need to have learnt how to use their native language or they lose the ability (as cited in Fellows & Oakley, 2010).

The Nativist perspective has received much criticism about the importance of environmental and social influences and how these have not been considered.

**Interactionist Perspective**

From the opposing perspective to that of the nativist, the interactionist perspective emphasises social interaction between children and significant ‘others’ in their environment as the key to language learning (Fellows & Oakley, 2010).

Humans are social beings and have a natural desire to communicate and be understood by others. Children who are not yet able to speak their home language will use a range of techniques to communicate and be understood by others. This can be as simple as a baby smiling and extending the arms to an adult to give the message that the child wants the...
adult to come close, or to a toddler who may point to the fridge and use their own language (babble) to communicate that s/he wants a bottle.

Language is learnt through a child being modelled to by a more competent other. As the child reaches for the fridge, Mother may state “Are you hungry, you want your bottle.”

“Bruner proposed that a language acquisition support system (LASS) assists children to learn language” (as cited in Fellows & Oakley, 2010, p. 36). The concept of scaffolding is essential in children’s acquisition of language. The more competent other (child or adult) speaks to the child and models the language and may encourage the child to say the word (e.g., ‘ta’).

**Neurobiological Perspective**

The neuroscience field, using sophisticated imagining and scanning equipment, have identified that the brain is indeed naturally wired for language acquisition. The brain has areas devoted to hearing, speaking and understanding language. The imaging has determined that environments and social interaction have a significant influence on people’s skill level and vocabulary. Children, who are exposed to a larger repertoire of words, have gained a significant sized vocabulary and increased comprehension abilities.

### Table 1.9 Overview: Speaking and listening development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of speaking and listening development</th>
<th>What children can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
<td>Children use and comprehend simple language of the home and community, using non-verbal cues to support their comprehension. They often speak in short utterances and may require considerable support in novel contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early</strong></td>
<td>Children use their home language to communicate everyday needs, express themselves and their ideas and to enquire through the asking of questions. They understand social and personal functions of language and they respond in ‘their own way’, but not necessarily in a conventional way, although they are becoming aware of conventions of speaking and listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploratory</strong></td>
<td>Children in the exploratory phase use standard forms of language (e.g., Standard Australian English) within familiar contexts and are able to communicate in both informal and formal contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidating</strong></td>
<td>Children use most features of language appropriately in several contexts, and show an increasing degree of audience awareness. They try out different ways of listening and speaking for different purposes. Through use and practice, they consolidate their learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Sourced from: Fellows & Oakley, 2010, p. 43)*
Table 1.9 and the information contained within the Raising children’s Network provide a basic overview of children’s communication development. This information can be used by educators and family members to monitor and assess children’s language development, to allow educators to celebrate children’s development and to look for opportunities to support children’s interests and further learning.

**Activity 1.31**

**Stages of communication development**

Click on the following hyperlinks (one at a time) or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the Raising Child Network web site -

- [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_3_to_12_months.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_3_to_12_months.html)
- [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_1_to_2_years.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_1_to_2_years.html)
- [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_5-6_years.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development_5-6_years.html)

Review the different stages of communication/language development.

- List a few characteristics of a child’s language development from each of the age groups listed below and note some of the experiences or interactions family members and educators can do to support children’s development.

**Activity 1.32**

**Read, review and consider**

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the Royal Children’s Hospital Centre for Community Child Health website article on Supporting language Development -


It is important to recognise that children’s language development incorporates a number of elements. Children develop receptive language (the ability to understand the meaning of words); expressive language (being able to state the sounds and words); non-verbal communication skills; and an interest in literacy (books, environmental print, digital literacy). All of these elements need to be considered in the documentation and programming for holistic learning.
Activity 1.33

Read

The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program Newsletter No.18 2011, Becoming literate.

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access this reading -


- What does the author highlight in regards to ‘using symbols?’ What are symbols? How do children use symbols?

Experiences and practices to enhance communication development

“Language-rich environments are key to overall quality in early childhood settings including frequent child-[educator] interactions around picture books and dramatic play” (Campbell, Torr & Cologon, 2014, p. 40).

All children are supported with their language and literacy skills through a rich immersion of quality language and literacy environments and activities. Singing, saying nursery rhymes, performing finger rhymes and, of course, talking with children and listening to them are important teaching strategies to support learning. Modelling conversation turn-taking (I speak – then you speak – then I speak again) allows children to learn the rules of conversation. The use of storytelling, dramatic play, role models and puppets support children’s language development.

Reading stories is an important experience. Not only does reading in small groups offer the opportunity to build relationships, enjoy the story, discuss the parts of the book (author, spine, text direction, the use of images); but it also provides opportunities to discuss letter sounds; highlight different words, letters, rhyme and the ability to ‘unpack the story’.

Language comprehension can be encouraged through the asking of questions; inviting inquiry. For example, when reading a book together, an educator may ask: ‘How did Hansel escape from the old lady?’ ‘What do you think might happen next?’ These questions and associated interactions help to build reading skills and language comprehension.

Interests in literacy are encouraged through exposure of authentic literacy experiences such as writing reflective journals, reading cook books, looking at street directories and maps, reading instructions, and developing menus and lists and notices.

Children’s language and literacy development and interest will develop at varying levels. Some children will have a strong desire for written symbols earlier and have an interest in learning to read. For other children, this might not happen until the child is at school. If
children are interested in reading, then it is important that educators provide the opportunity and resources for children to explore their interest.

You can’t have too many stories!

Connor, J. (2011, p.2)

Figure: 1.22 Children thoroughly enjoying a story. This class read all of the Pamela Allen books. They made a list of the books they read and highlighted the similarities in the story line and the rhyme used within the stories.

Figure: 1.23 Children were encouraged to illustrate their adventures through pictures and narratives.

Figure: 1.24 Children sign in and out each day, like the adults. Children learn letters have meaning and that they are used for communication. Adults talk to children about letters, their shape and formation and the sounds, naturally as part of the discussion when engaged in these experiences.
Phonics programs have no place in early childhood settings!

According to Campell, Torr and Cologon (2014), there is no evidence of any benefit towards young children’s emergent literacy in the short or long term through the use of commercial pre-packaged phonics programs, such as Letterland and Jolly Phonics.

This research paper is available in the Additional Reading section of this Module on MyPortal if students would like to read or access further information from the article.

Figure: 1.25 Children construct the ‘real’ and authentic signs to communicate with families such as this 2014 Parent Volunteer Poster.

Activity 1.34

Read and explore

Click on the following website to view the educator and parent resources available on the Mem Fox web site -

http://memfox.com/

Mem Fox is one of Australia’s leading children’s authors.
Activity 1.35

Explore

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the national reading program Let’s Read website -


This website has lots of useful suggestions, tips and resources for both educators and families to use to support ignite children’s interest and connection to reading.

To ensure a sense of belonging for all children and their families, resources should be available in home languages; whether they speak Standard Australian English or in a language other than English. It is essential that educators work in partnership with families to support children through the transition into the service and while all parties (children, family and educators) are building and establishing relationships. It may be necessary to employ interpreters to support communication between the family and educator to establish support strategies.

To value the family and the child, it is essential that we value and hold dear the customs, culture of the family and support their first language. Educators should ask family members if there are any traditional children’s books that should be included in the service resources. Wherever possible, children should be encouraged to learn simple words and phrases (verbally and written) of children attending the service where there is more than one language spoken. Children’s first language is as important as children learning Standard Australian English and it may be necessary for educators to reassure families that it is okay for children to use their home language at the service and that the child will also learn Standard Australian English. Some families are so desperate to have their child ‘have a sense of belonging and to be an English speaking Australia’ that the child is encouraged not to speak their first language.
Activity 1.36

Supporting children where English is not their first language.

An excellent resource to support educators with children who have English not as their first language has been developed in Victoria. This resource provides a wealth of information for educators including: working with the child’s family, the importance of maintaining the child’s home language and supporting them to learn English.

To access this resource, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL into our web browser -


Read the section on the importance of maintaining the child’s home language (pp. 9-11) and describe what you could do within your service to support bilingual children.

What strategies would you apply in your setting if you had a new migrant child from Pakistan in your room and the child’s parent had said to the child, ‘He must learn English, and he is to speak only English at the service’?

Diversity of languages

Language and literacy is not just Standard Australian English, verbal or written text.

Children live in a digital literate world. Children use mathematical language daily as they shop and watch family members go about daily tasks. Our world is full of text and symbols all which have meaning. Children need to have the opportunity to be exposed to and explore the diversity of symbols and to be able to construct their ideas and ways of thinking through the use of symbols.
Activity 1.37

Activity description

Story reading with three children is an Early Childhood Australia PLP video which is 3.24 mins in length.

To access this resource, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL into our web browser -

Loris Malaguzzi (n.d.) wrote the poem about the metaphor One Hundred Languages illustrating that children learn and express their ideas through many different symbols. The Early Years Learning Framework (Outcome 5) supports the notion of the hundred languages by stating that “children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media” (DEEWR, 2009, p.42). “This is evident when children… use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, storytelling to express ideas sand make meaning” (DEEWR, 2009, p.42).

Activity 1.38

Read and consider

The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program 2011 Newsletter No.22 Being numerate.

To access a copy of this reading, click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the following URL into your web browser -
http://www.innovativeteacherproject.org/reggio/poem.php
Activity 1.39

Developing early maths skills

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the Zero to Three Child Development website -

Read the section on supporting early mathematical skills.
An environment for holistic learning and development

## Element 6

**Foster an environment for holistic learning and development**

6.1 Support and initiate inquiry processes, try new ideas and take on challenges

6.2 Provide resources and materials that offer challenge, intrigue and surprise

6.3 Assist to promote children’s sense of belonging and connectedness

6.4 Engage children in sustained shared conversations to extend their thinking

6.5 Provide the opportunity for scaffolding learning and development

6.6 Assist children to see their mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow

6.7 Facilitate families’ diverse contributions to the learning community

6.8 Share information with colleagues about child development and wellbeing

6.9 Create learning environments where children are able to immerse themselves in self-directed play

6.10 Recognise spontaneous teachable moments as they occur and use them to build on children’s learning

6.11 Ensure a balance between child-initiated and educator-supported learning

6.12 Provide learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take risks in their learning

6.13 Facilitate team collaboration of assessments and evaluation in relation to child development and wellbeing

Children do not learn or develop in isolation, rather it is holistic. Development and learning is interconnected and as children develop one skill, it is likely that they also are developing in many other areas. Furthermore, children’s learning and development cannot be separated. This realisation has challenged traditional early childhood practice which attempted to compartmentalise children’s development. The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) has shifted the traditional focus from early childhood development to a focus on outcomes. The following are the five outcomes identified in Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009):

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
• Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
• Children are confident and involved learners, and
• Children are effective communicators.

Although the focus is no longer on developmental milestones; development naturally falls within each of the learning outcomes.

Inquiry based learning

Throughout this chapter, educators have explored the theories and knowledge about children’s development. The areas of development have included physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication (language). It is critical that educators have a good understanding of the theories and knowledge so that they can monitor children’s progression. This knowledge and awareness will ensure that educators can fully support children’s learning and partner with families to seek support where there may be concerns regarding children’s progress.

Having the knowledge and skills about how children learn and develop enables educators to plan and construct environments that encourage play-based learning. “Play-based learning: a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations” (DEEWR, 2009, p.6). Furthermore, educators are required to ensure children are actively involved in learning at “…appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning” (DEEWR, 2009, p.35). Experimenting, problem solving, theory making reasoning and hypothesising are seen as inquiry processes necessary for lifelong learning.

So how do educators establish what children know so that they can extend their learning and help establish opportunities for inquiry? Educators can use a process of talking with children or through close purposeful and intentional listening to the child with all of our senses.

Open ended questions

There may be times when you need to use a series of open-ended questions to support children’s further engagement or to help you understanding children’s current knowledge, ideas and understanding. Open ended questions are questions that simply require more than a yes or no. Yes and no answers do not make for sustained shared conversations; they do not give very much detail. For example: “What did you like about the movie?” has more opportunity for you to obtain more information that if you asked, “Did you like the movie”?

Examples of open-ended questions educators could use with children include:

• How could you describe what happened within this experience?
• Can you use your imagination and think what could actually happen?
• Can you help me think this through?
• How could you make this situation work?
• How would you describe the main character in the book?

Activity 1.40

Read – Reflect - Respond

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the National Quality Standard Professional e-Newsletter No. 43 (2012) Sustained Shared Thinking -


Listening and encouraging children to use their imagination

Teachers and educators love to teach! We often think of teaching as talking, telling children the answers so that we can teach them or asking a series of questions, that adults see as important to teach certain concepts. For example: “What colour is the object?” (teaching children about colour); “How many cars are on the mat?” (teaching children maths concepts around counting), and “What is the height of the blocks?” (teaching children maths concepts around measurement). Asking questions (particularly open-ended questions) has an important place, however silence at times can be a rich gift and offering a provocation to a child, a statement to provide further thinking may be more appropriate at times.

If we consider the above questions posed to the child, is this what children are really interested in? Is it colour, number and measurement or has the child got a natural curiosity to learn something else? Will our questions, if they don’t relate to the task, lead to the child disengaging? Why do adults think the concepts we try and teach are more important that what the child is trying to understand?

It is important to remember that children are born into this world with an innate desire to understand their world. Rather than asking questions, what we really need to do is draw our attention to the children’s attention (Pelo, 2014).

Listening to children authentically and with intent supports educators to move from a position of instruction (where we are telling) to a place of inquiry. The desire is to assist educators to recognise that they are researchers with children, searching to know and know in a different way. Our intention, as promoted in the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009), is to cultivate curiosity.

Some students may be puzzled as to why educators are encouraged to hold back on giving children answers and encouraged to teach children how to research information and to make their own inquiries. It is important to recognise that today’s child is a new generation, very different from all other generations. The current generation (Z generation) live in a time that is unlike any other. In this technological age, where information is at the tips of most people’s fingers, providing the answers to questions is not the solution. What children require
to be ongoing successful learners is to be able to ask questions, be creative and generate new ways thinking and problem solving (Zubrick, 2014).

We understand the child by watching, listen and thinking reflectively about what we are seeing. This view will be from the perspective of the educator and thus it is important to gain the views of others to ensure a holistic understanding of the child is gained. Furthermore, educators cannot contain all the data in their mind about children’s learning, development and wellbeing, so to ensure the information is not distorted due to time and memory lapse, the data collected must be documented in some form. This is a requirement of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009).

Once educators have ‘listened to the child or children, the next important step is for the educator to document the encounter. This can be completed independently or with the child/ren after the experience or while the encounter is progressing. Data about the listening, including the educator’s thinking, may be shared, considered, reflected on, traces made and the event celebrated and not forgotten allowing potential for the experience to be revisited by the child over and over again. The recording of the event and your thinking, is part of what is called documentation. Documentation will be explored in further detail later in this chapter. However, first let us consider the role of resources and the environment in supporting inquiry based learning and the learning disposition that are advantageous in supporting children’s learning and development.

**Resources that challenge, intrigue and surprise**

Materials in early childhood education and care programs are central to the learning and teaching process. Children explore, manipulate, question, make theories, test properties and challenge themselves and often the resource. The resources available to children reflect the values and philosophy of the service.

We need to consider:

- Are children, their families and their culture reflected in the resources available?
- Do resources interest children and challenge their skills and knowledge?
- Do resources reflect children as competent citizens?

Children deserve beautiful and interesting things. This does not mean that they need to be expensive; rather items could be recycled, collected by children and families, and flexible so that they can be used in a number of different ways. Many people in the past have donated old, broken and inappropriate resources and toys to early childhood services, thinking they were doing the service a benefit. Unless resources are safe, not-broken (in good condition), are useful and are respectful of all cultures and genders, then the item does not have a place within a service.

Selection of materials is not the only consideration. Time is needed on the presentation of materials, and how these items will be provided to the children.

Carter and Curtis (2008) emphasise that to “…enhance children’s use of materials towards more complex learning, you must challenge yourself to become more mindful and deliberate with what you provide and how you provide it” (p.54).
There are a number of points Carter and Curtis (2008) encouraged educators to consider when looking at resources and materials for play. These include:

- select materials using an enhanced view of children
- invent new possibilities for familiar materials (e.g., can you think of using a resource in a different or unusual way?)
- draw on the aesthetic qualities of materials
- choose materials that can be transformed (Materials that are open-ended can be transformed and encourage children to think, draw on past experiences, creativity and imagination and allow for resources to be used to multiple ways. Open ended materials may include coloured glass beads, fur print material, scarves, and baskets that could be displayed beside small world figures/home corner/sand pits.)
- provide real tools and quality materials
- supply materials to extend children’s interests, and
- layer materials to offer complexity.

I would extend this list further to encourage thought about:

- connection of the resource to the local community, and
- consideration of how the resource reflects the cultures of the children from the services and if there a resource that creates a sense of belonging for all children?

The plastic and often commercial resources and toys that have been dominant in early childhood education and care field for the last decade usually have a one-purpose, cause and effect component. The children learn how to use the resource and then there is not much else available to do with the toy. Children grow tired of the resource and often look for other interests. Open-ended resources intrigue children and encourage multiple uses as children engage their imaginary processes.

Dispositions

The notion of ‘dispositions’ was new to many educators with the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). This is not surprising because for many years the emphasis on the work educators did in early childhood education was on child development, including skill development. A shift in thinking, influenced by Te Whāriki (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) the internationally recognised early childhood curriculum from New Zealand, challenged educators to think about behaviours that children (or adults) use for learning (Arthur, L., Beecher, B., Death, E., Dockett, S., & Farmer, S., 2012).

In a technological era where children have ‘knowledge’ at the end of their fingertips, what is important for children’s learning is having behaviours/tendencies for being effective learners. These behaviours/tendencies are called dispositions.

Unlike personal traits, dispositions can be influenced by family, community and educators; the key people in the child’s life. Carr (as cited in Arthur et al., 2012) described dispositions as ‘an accumulation of motivation, situation and skill…[such that] a learner is “ready, willing and able” to learn’ (p.293).
The Early Years Learning Framework defines dispositions as “enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations. For example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence” (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Encouraging children to develop a thirst for learning, a willingness to have-a-go, to recognise that making mistakes is part of the learning process, all support people to be effective and engaged learners. Some positive dispositions that support people to learn include:

- problem-solving
- asking questions
- being creative / innovative
- willingness to have-a-go
- cooperative and collaborative
- persistent
- curious, and
- resilient (recognising making mistakes is part of the learning process).

Through their interaction with children, educators can encourage children to adjust, adapt or learn new disposition. A non-risk taker can learn to ‘have-a-go’. Children who have positive learning dispositions generally are more successful as life-long learners!

**Experiences and practices that encourage holistic learning and development**

Learning does not happen in isolation. Traditional education systems that focus on one developmental or content area are not providing real and authentic learning experiences that allow children to thrive. Early childhood provide opportunities for children to build upon and learn across a number of developmental and learning domains and within areas of their own interest. Within the next section, educators will consider the educator’s role in supporting children’s learning through intentional teaching opportunities.

**Intentional teaching**

Vygotsky’s (1896 – 1934) (Berk & Winsler, 2005) theory about the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the term scaffolding (which was actually theorised by Bruner) relate to higher mental functions that occur through the interactions of two or more people. Vygotsky’s theory identifies the guidance and support of adults, or more competent children are significant influences in cognitive development. Zone of proximal development is the zone between where children are almost able to do something, and the area where they can achieve something with the support of the more capable other. With some extra help, the child is able to do the task that they could not do alone. The importance of the ZPD is that this zone is the area in which cognitive development occurs. Scaffolding can be as simple as an adult providing some verbal cues to support the child’s thinking, or using fingers to point out objects as children count (one-to-one correspondence). Scaffolding is usually reduced when children begin to adopt internalised (private) speech.
The zone of proximal development is the gap between what a child can do alone and what the child can do when supported by a more skilled or experienced other person such as another child or adult. This is particularly important concept to early childhood professionals because it means if we understand the zone of proximal development, as educators we can intentionally teach children within this zone to support children’s learning (scaffolding).

“Intention teaching is thoughtful, informed and deliberate” (Connor, 2010, p.1). However, intentional teaching can occur when teachable moments occur throughout the day.

**Activity 1.41**

**Watch and consider**

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL into your web browser to access the vignette from the 2012 Early Childhood Australia conference of Intentional Teaching -


**Activity 1.42**

**Read and consider**

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL into your web browser to access the newsletter written a follow up piece from the vignette -


- So what do you think Intentional Teaching is?
- How would you describe it to a colleague?
Intentional teaching is the teaching we enact when working with children. At times, this may be planned, such as teaching children how to use a new resource such as felt pens for the first time, or it may be enacted as something emerges from the program.

**Introducing felt pens to young children.**

Today, I am putting into our college area these new pens. These pens are special pens and produce this beautiful bright colour (Demonstrate on butcher’s paper). Now these special pens are called felt pens and have some special care rules that need to be followed so that they stay healthy and last for a long time for all children to use.

Can you see when I take the lid off? I place it onto the back of the pen so that I do not lose the lid. The lids are very important hats the keeps the pen magic. If we lose the hat, the pen gets very sick and we cannot use it. When I use the pens, because they are special I need to hold them carefully. Can you see how I am holding this pen?

**Self-directed play and learning**

Throughout this module, educators have been encouraged to consider their role in early childhood services, when to engage in children’s learning experiences and when to stay out. There will be occasions in the early childhood service life when children will not want to engage. Sometimes, people like to relax and just let the world go by. For children who may attend the service for lengthy periods of time, or who have busy lives outside the service ‘relaxing, and just being’ is an okay place to be (Walker, 2005). Respecting children’s wishes to not participate is important and providing quiet spaces for children to ‘hang out in’ is important around an often busy early childhood service.

Children like to feel in control of their lives, while at the same time having a sense of safety, being cared for and with boundaries. Educators encourage children to direct their own play and learning when they provide:

- a range of open ended resources for them to engage with, space and time to explore and repeat ideas and theories
- resources that are of interest to children and provide considered challenge
- children are encourage to access resources and equipment as they require
- children are encouraged to organise the space, and
- children are taught how to use certain apparatus.

It is important to recognise that children want to work with real equipment. For example, children who want to cut, do not want ‘plastic’ scissors that don’t do the function. Providing children with authentic tools (such as an electric drill) supports children to accomplish their interest. Safety is an absolute priority and it is important that educators ensure all people are safe at all times. If equipment is to be used that provides a hazard (such as toddlers using an electric drill), the child needs to be taught how to use the equipment and supported in a one-to-one situation to allow this to occur.
Considered risk

Consider the environment that the children will be exploring. Think about whether the environment encourages a range of physical activities. If it does not, what can be done short and long term to change this? How can educators work with families to add healthy levels of considered risk taking and differences in the environment to encourage exploration and activity?

Children need to be able to take ‘considered risks’ to enable learning and development to occur. For instance, a considered risk may be attempting to climb a ladder for the first time. In this situation, the risk is ‘considered’ because the educator reflects upon the child’s abilities and steps in closer in case the child needs extra support. The educator also will talk the child through the actions needed for success.

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**Goodstart Institute of Early Learning Professional Learning Workshop**

Students may wish to participate in a professional learning workshop on Benefits of Considered Risk Taking in Early Childhood available on the Institute Professional Learning Workshop Calendar. These workshops are available on-campus or via live webinar.

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**Activity 1.43**

**Read – consider – respond**

Click on the following hyperlink or copy and paste the URL address into your web browser to access the National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program on Inquiry Based Learning - [http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqspip/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/NQS_PLP_E-Newsletter_No45.pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqspip/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/NQS_PLP_E-Newsletter_No45.pdf)

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**Partners in the planning cycle**

Educators working with children in early childhood education and care services see the child for just one section of the child’s life. In most cases, the child has another life at home which may include the family and local community. To understand and support the child from a holistic perspective, it is absolutely essential to work with the child, family, local community (where possible) and service colleagues (where permission has been obtained) to consider the child’s learning and development from each person’s perspective and to consider the child’s abilities, interests and experiences within the service and external to the service and to ensure service documentation (assessment & evaluation) is used to provide future programmed opportunities for the child (Arthur et al., 2012).
The service philosophy should make statements about collaborative approaches to documentation and assessment and guide service educators. Families and new educators should be introduced to the service philosophy when they begin at the service and invited to participate in a number of ways to be involved.

**Partnerships with educators - children – family and community**

**The Early Years Learning Framework** (DEEWR, 2009):

“Including children, families and other professionals in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate assessment processes allows for new understandings to emerge that are not possible if educators rely solely on their own strategies and perspectives” (p.17).

This chapter has considered the relevant aspects of educational theories and demonstrated their connection to early childhood education and care practices, experiences and environments that support young children’s learning and development.

It has been highlighted that through the act of listening to children, educators can gain an understanding of children’s current knowledge, development and well-being as well as their current learning dispositions. With this knowledge, educators can partner with children, families and relevant community members to consider these theories of learning and development and current evidenced based practice to make informed pedagogical decisions.
National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a key aspect of the NQF and sets a national benchmark for early childhood education and care, and outside school hours care services in Australia. It provides families and educators with a more detailed understanding of children’s education and care requirements, objectives, outcomes, and expectations.

The NQS comprises quality areas, standards and elements.

There are seven quality areas. Although all quality areas are reflected within this module, there are four quality areas that are dominant.

| QA1 | Educational program and practice |
| QA3 | Physical environment |
| QA5 | Relationships with children |
| QA6 | Collaborative partnerships with families and communities |

(ACECQA, 2013)

Summary table of quality areas, standards and elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA1</th>
<th>Educational program and practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child’s learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Curriculum decision making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2</td>
<td>Each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1.3</td>
<td>The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child’s learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1.4</td>
<td>The documentation about each child’s program and progress is available to families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1.5</td>
<td>Each child is supported to participate in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.6</td>
<td>Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1</td>
<td>Each child’s learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.2</td>
<td>Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3</td>
<td>Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA3</td>
<td>Physical environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA5</td>
<td>Relationships with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1</td>
<td>Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2</td>
<td>Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition for life and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3</td>
<td>Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviours of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA6</td>
<td>Collaborative partnerships with families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1</td>
<td>There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2</td>
<td>Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3</td>
<td>Current information about the service is available to families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2 Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.

6.3 The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing.

6.3.1 Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.

6.3.2 Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.

6.3.3 Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.

6.3.4 The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

(ACECQA, 2013, p.10 – 11)

Click on the hyperlink to go to the ACECQA website to view the full 58 elements:

Summary

This module has considered the relevant theories of children’s development: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication. It has been emphasised that children’s development is influenced by culture, experience and resources and children’s development although occurring in similar sequences is not age based. Furthermore, it was noted that development cannot be compartmentalised and, in fact, not only does development occur across the range of skills (e.g. physical and language development often occur simultaneously) but learning and development are interconnected.

The educator plays an important role in working closely in partnership with children, family and community to provide appropriate challenge through the provision of play-based learning programs set around children’s interests and intrigue. This approach enables children to thrive and provides them with the skills necessary for lifelong learning. Simple and open-ended resources as well as inquiry-based processes have been highlighted as appropriate for encouraging exploration and extending children’s interests.
References


Glossary

**Additional needs:** Person requiring extra support or resources to succeed at tasks. These needs may be due to cultural backgrounds, education background, family issues, giftedness, intellectual or physical disabilities. Some people prefer the term ‘special rights’ rather than ‘additional needs’.

**Agency:** Being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Children:** Refers to babies, toddlers, and three to five years olds, unless otherwise stated (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Collaboration:** Involves working together cooperatively towards common goals. Collaboration is achieved through information sharing, joint planning, and the development of common understandings and objectives.

**Community participation:** Taking an active role in participating to communities (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Co-construct:** Work in partnership with children (and sometimes other adults) to construct children’s learning.

**Communities:** Social or cultural groups or networks that share a common purpose, heritage, rights and responsibilities and/or other bonds. ‘Communities’ is used variously to refer, for example, the community within early childhood settings, extended kinship, the local geographic community, and broader Australian society (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Critical reflection:** Reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (DEEWR, 2009, p.45). It involves examining and analysing events, experiences and practices from a range of perspectives to inform future planning and decision making.

**Curriculum:** In the early childhood setting, curriculum means ‘all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development’ (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Disability:** May include a person with physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, and/or neurological learning disabilities; physical disfigurement; the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms; and severe back pain.

**Dispositions:** Enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations. For example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Diversity:** An array of skills, knowledge and perspectives, which may include: age; cultural background; ability; education level; ethnicity; expertise; gender; family responsibilities; family structure; language; learning styles; life experiences; marital status; religious belief; socioeconomic background; thinking styles; working styles; sexual orientation; political orientation; geographic location; and professional skills and functions.
Early childhood education and care services: Long day care, occasional care, family day care, multi-purpose Aboriginal Children’s Services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, crèches, early intervention settings, and similar services.

Educators: Early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.

EYLF: Early Years Learning Framework

Harm: Harm is defined within the Child Protection Act 1999 Qld s.9 as ‘any detrimental effect of any significant nature on a child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing’.

Inclusion: Involves taking into account all children’s social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances, and geographical location) in program decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure all children’s experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.

Intentional teaching: Involves Educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. The opposite of ‘teaching by rote’ or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been completed in a certain manner.

Involvement: Is a state of intense, wholehearted mental activity, characterised by sustained concentration and intrinsic motivation. Highly involved children (and adults) operate at the limits of their capacities, leading to changed ways of responding and understanding leading to deep-level learning (adapted from Laevers, 1994) (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Learning: A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Learning framework: A guide that provides general goals or outcomes for children’s learning and how they might be attained. It also provides a scaffold to assist early childhood settings to develop their own, more detailed curriculum (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Learning outcome: A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Life-long learning: A self-motivated process that extends intellectual, vocational and personal horizons that begins from an early stage of life and continue throughout life.

Literacy: Includes a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading, and writing.

NQF: National Quality Framework

NQS: National Quality Standard

Numeracy: Broadly includes understanding about numbers, patterns, measurements, spatial awareness, and data, as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning, and counting.
Pedagogy: Early childhood educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching, and learning (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Play-based learning: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage with people, objects, and representations (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Protective factors: A factor that may influence or reduce the likelihood of future harm by interacting to support, enhance or develop a family’s capacity, motivation and competence to meet the child’s protective needs.

Reflexivity: Children’s growing awareness of the ways that their experiences, interests, and beliefs shape their understanding (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Relationships: Interactions between two or more people or groups of people that may progress or inhibit potential or agreed outcomes. For example, a positive relationship may further a child’s wellbeing, learning and development, whereas a negative relationship may inhibit positive outcomes for the child.

Risk factor: Anything that prevents a person from achieving their objectives. For example, the risk factors in an abusive family situation heighten the probability the child within the family may be harmed.

Scaffold: The educators’ decisions and actions that build on children’s existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning. For example, relating new knowledge to student’s current knowledge or breaking new information into smaller, more manageable parts (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Spiritual: Refers to a range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder, and an exploration of being and knowing (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Technologies: includes much more than computers and digital technologies used for information, communication, and entertainment. Technologies are the diverse range of products that make up the designed world. These products extend beyond artefacts designed and developed by people and include processes, systems, services, and environments (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Texts: Things that we read, view, listen to, and that we create in order to share meaning. Text can be print-based, such as books, magazines and posters, or screen-based, for example internet sites and DVDs. Many texts are multimodal, integrating images, written words and/or sounds (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

Transitions: The process of moving between home and childcare services, between a range of different early childhood services (for example, kindergarten to childcare), or from an early childhood service to full-time school (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).

**Wellbeing**: Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs: The need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs; and for meaning in life. It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning, and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience (DEEWR, 2009, p.45).