Talking About Practice: Planning and Documentation

Each of the three educators featured were able to describe how they implement all the steps of the planning cycle, despite working in different settings and in different parts of Australia. Each of their settings has unique aspects, beliefs and values that incorporate the views of educators and families and that provide the basis for the philosophy that guides their work.

In the EYLF, ‘assessment for children’s learning refers to the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children’s learning.’ (EYLF, p. 17)

Educators who were able to attend the EYLF PLP workshops will be familiar with the diagram below, which visually portrays that ongoing cycle:

Alison, Marion and Genevieve were able to describe and show how they complete the next step of the planning cycle by analysing what they know about children and how they decide on goals for further learning. They try not to describe everyday participation in experiences, but to focus on the learning that they see. They then think about what they have learned to help them identify which Learning Outcomes are most in focus and use this to inform the next steps in their planning. Links are made to the Learning Outcomes and these are reviewed to determine each child’s progress or ‘distance travelled’ towards meeting the Outcomes.

Each of the three educators uses the reflection process of the planning cycle to record what they have learned about the children and themselves. They see reflective practice as an ongoing cycle where they consistently examine their practice, make adjustments, experiment with new ideas and evaluate over time.

Some things to think about:

- Does your service philosophy reflect the uniqueness of your setting and the core elements of the EYLF and the six guiding principles of the NQS?
  - The rights of the child are paramount.
  - Children are successful, competent and capable learners.
  - Equity, inclusion and diversity.
  - Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.
  - The role of parents and families is respected and supported.
  - There are high expectations for children, educators and service providers.
  (Guide to the National Quality Standard, pp. 7–8)

- Are you using a range of different methods for collecting information about children?

- Do you have a method for regularly analysing each child’s learning in relation to the Learning Outcomes? Can you see the ‘distance travelled’? (EYLF, p. 17)

- Are you able to show the child’s progress to them and their families?

(Please note—if you were not able to attend a Workshop, the information is available on the Early Childhood Australia website: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eylfplp/workshops.html)

In these video segments each of the educators describe what guides their decision-making and the range of ways that they collect information in order to build a complete picture of each child.
Does your planning process incorporate the Vision, Principles and Practices of the EYLF?

Other questions you might like to consider are:

- Is there a balance between pre-planned and emergent curriculum?
- Are there enough blocks of time for children to be able to get truly involved in play (building, acting, climbing and creating) that is important to them and worthwhile?
- Is there flexibility in routines (drinks, meals, sleep time and stories) to account for the varied daily rhythms of children and staff?

(Patterson and Fleet, p. 21)

- As you prepare the environment both indoors and outdoors, do you remain focused on the five Principles and eight Practices of the EYLF and use them to guide your work as you implement your plans?
- Do you reflect carefully on what you learned about the children as well as what you learned about your own practice?

The EYLF encourages educators to think more deeply about this part of the planning cycle. Do you consider every aspect of the curriculum (interactions between educators and children as well as between children, planned and spontaneous experiences, transitions, routines and group times if applicable) and record your thoughts about what worked and what didn’t? Do you record any implications for future planning?

Knowing, understanding and engaging with the EYLF will assist you to fine-tune your approaches to documentation and planning, as well as guide all aspects of practice.

The following EYLF PLP e-Newsletters will help you in your continued reflection about planning and documentation:


This includes some helpful questions to assist you to assess whether they are meeting all the necessary steps of the on-going cycle of planning and documentation.

EYLF PLP E-Newsletter no. 19, 2011. Myths and Realities.

This newsletter dispels some of the myths that have arisen as practitioners explore the EYLF and prepare for the NQS.


EYLF PLP E-Newsletter no. 9, 2011. Documenting Learning.


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References:
