



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

Documented plans, records of children's assessments and evaluations can be effective ways to support and extend children's thinking, learning and development.

'Rich documentation incorporates multiple perspectives and makes learning visible to the community' (p. 37 Educators Guide- Belonging, Being & Becoming)

Guidelines for documenting children's learning

One of the strengths of the approved learning frameworks, the National Quality Standard (NQS) and related regulatory standards is that while acknowledging the important role of documentation, they are not prescriptive about how it is done.

Recognising the individuality of each service, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Educators can explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their children, families, service and community. This recognises the professionalism of the sector and allows educators to concentrate on documentation that supports quality outcomes for children.

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- View documentation as an important part of your work with children and families. and as part of a cycle of observation, analysis, planning, implementation and reflection.
- Capture children's voices and ideas in planning, documentation and evaluation.
- Try different methods to find what is realistic, achievable and relevant for children,

families, educators, then set and establish some benchmarks that are reviewed regularly.

- Be selective in what you choose to document because it is not possible to capture all of the rich experiences and learnings that occur every day.
- Share documentation efforts and experiences, and continue to learn, grow and develop.
- Be open to change as the dynamics of the children's group or team change.
- Constantly review and remind yourself why you are documenting and for whom.
- Make it relevant for the setting, as documentation will look different across different settings. For example, long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschool require different methods of documenting, given that children vary in ages and amounts of time spent in the service.
- Be clear about what the standards, learning frameworks and, if relevant, the funding agreements are asking you to do.

WHY DO YOU NEED TO DOCUMENT?

Gathering and analysing information about what children know, can do and understand is part of the ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning.

This process helps educators (in partnership with children, families and other professionals) to:

- plan effectively for children's current and future learning/wellbeing
- communicate about children's learning and progress/wellbeing and development
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing in their learning outcomes and if not, what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular learning outcomes and provide that support, or assist families to access specialist help
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered and the approaches taken to enable children's learning/wellbeing
- reflect on pedagogy that will suit the context and children

The requirements for documentation are outlined in Quality Area 1 of the NQS and in regulations 73 to 76 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations and section 168 of the Education and Care Services National Law.

DO I NEED A TEMPLATE OR A PROGRAM TO FOLLOW?

No - there are no mandated templates or programs for documenting children's learning or educational experiences. While templates and programs may be a helpful way to organise information, there is a risk that they can be limiting. Resist the temptation to reduce documentation to a 'tick and flick' approach. It is not about filling in blank boxes.

There are many electronic, visual and paper based ways to document the educational program and assessments or evaluations, including individual and group observations. Some ideas:

- enrolment information and input from families
- details on children's strengths, ideas, abilities and interests along with ongoing evidence of children's engagement and participation in the program
- learning stories or narratives of key events
- photographs with captions, photographic sequences, video or audio recordings
- observations such as jottings, anecdotes or running records
- learning and/or reflective journals
- surveys and feedback forms
- notes from meetings or conversations with children, families, staff colleagues and other professionals
- communication or floor books
- portfolios or scrap books including samples of children's work, artwork and writings
- collection of children's feedback, ideas and suggestions including children's own documentation on the program
- visual displays including mind maps, diagrams, sketches and curriculum pathways
- quality improvement plans
- electronic records or Apps
- language transcripts and notes
- feedback from families and educators on the program and practice.

The main thing to remember is that it is not the amount of documentation you have, or how immaculately or colourfully the information is presented, but how the documentation is used. Ask yourself, how does the documentation assist in planning effectively for children's current and future learning and communicating about children's learning and progress? Is it meaningful information that captures children's understandings, dispositions, knowledge and skills and how does this inform the content of the curriculum and educators pedagogy.

WHAT IS THE AUTHORISED OFFICER LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY ARE ASSESSING AND RATING?

The authorised officer will observe, discuss and sight supporting documentation to identify examples and evidence that your service is meeting the NQS and legislative requirements.

Be prepared for these assessments by thinking about how you would talk about your documentation and what you particularly want the authorised officer to observe, discuss and sight that shows how you are meeting the requirements.

ARE THERE RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE?

Many educators have generously shared their thoughts and ideas about documentation. For example, the Early Childhood Australia Professional Learning Program includes several newsletters that explore documentation and provide examples. These resources are now available on the Early Childhood Resource Hub: <http://www.echr.edu.au/>

In addition to the learning frameworks, the related educators guides – [Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework](#) and [Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care](#) and the Early Years Framework in Action are useful resources.

The [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) is designed to help education and care providers, educators and authorised officers understand and apply the requirements of the NQF. The information in the Guide has been taken from the previous NQF Resource Kit and the Operational Policy Manual, to produce a single document, updated to reflect changes to the NQF.

Documenting programs for school age children has useful information in methods for documenting children's learning when educating and caring for school aged children.

More Information

Contact your state or territory regulatory authority for more information on approvals. The contact details for regulatory authorities are available at www.acecqa.gov.au.