

Podcast 4 Assessments

TOPIC: What educators may expect in an assessment and rating visit and tips for improving your service

Hello and welcome. Approved providers, educators and staff are often keen to know what an authorised officer is looking for when they carry out their assessment and ratings of an education and care service.

The authorised officer will observe, discuss and sight supporting documentation to identify examples and evidence that your service is meeting the requirements in the National Quality Standard and related regulatory standard.

Prior to your service's assessment, it's important to have undertaken an open, honest and reflective self-assessment against Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard and the related regulatory standards.

Think about how you'd like to demonstrate that your service is meeting the standards, what you'd like the authorised officer to sight, what you'd like to talk to them about at your service and the work you're doing in partnership with children and families.

Examples of what the authorised officer will be looking for can be found in the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. The Guide provides information for each of the 18 standards and 58 elements of the National Quality Standard.

However, it's important to remember that the examples provided are not a checklist, but rather 'paint a picture' of what's expected at the Meeting National Quality Standard rating level.

Many educators have generously shared their thoughts and ideas about documentation. For example, the Early Childhood Australia Professional Learning Program includes a number of newsletters that explore documentation and provide examples.

In addition, you might like to visit the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) online library or contact the Professional Support Co-ordinator in your state or territory to provide you or your service with professional development and support.

Your peak organisation is also likely to have resources and professional development available to assist you.

Make sure you refer often to the approved learning frameworks to ensure that the five outcomes for children are being progressed. These are namely, that:

- 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.

These five outcomes are designed to capture the integrated and complex wellbeing, development and learning of all children. They are all broad and observable outcomes.

In addition to the learning outcomes the principles and practices of the Frameworks are founded on beliefs that:

- children are capable and competent
- children actively construct their own learning
- learning is dynamic, complex and holistic

- children have agency, that they are recognised as having rights and the capacity to make choices and decisions, initiate and lead learning and be active participants.

The principles of the framework are:

- secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- partnerships
- high expectations and equity
- respect for diversity, and
- ongoing learning and reflective practice.

The fifth principle which is ongoing learning and reflective practice, is often described as critical reflection.

As educators, you become co-learners or co-constructors of knowledge with children, their families and your community. Growing together requires a reflective practice in the form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice.

Continue to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich the decision-making process about children's learning. Think about what happens in your setting and reflect on what you might like to change to improve outcomes for children and your service.

There are a number of resources available to support educators to critically reflect on their practices. For example, the *Educators Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* and the *Educators Guide to the Framework for School Age Care* unpack the notion of reflective practice, and along with the approved learning frameworks include questions to guide reflection.

The Early Childhood Australian National Quality Framework Professional Learning Program also includes a newsletter and other resources to support reflective practice.

This graphic from the Early Years Learning Framework outlines the learning outcomes, principles and practices for services which children preschool age and under. For services with school age children the practices are similar, but instead of intentional teaching the focus is on intentionality, and instead of assessment for learning the focus is on evaluation for well-being and learning.

Implementing the practices alongside principles will assist in achieving learning outcomes that will form the strong foundation to give children the best possible start for a successful, healthy and happy life.

As well as the learning frameworks, have a look at the relevant Educators Guides, the *Educators Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework* and *Educators Guide to the Framework for School Age Care*. The *Early Years Framework in Action* is also a useful resource. Being familiar with these resources will help you and your service meet and possibly exceed the National Quality Standard.

There are a number of resources available from the Early Childhood Australia National Quality Framework Professional Learning Program and the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) online library. The Professional Support Co-ordinator in each state and territory provides professional development and support in this area.

Your peak organisations are also likely to have resources and professional development available to assist you.

For more information on documentation please visit:

ACECQA – www.acecqa.gov.au/mythbusters

Professional Support Coordinators Alliance – www.pscalliance.org.au

Inclusion and Professional Support Program Online library – www.ipsplibrary.net.au

Early Childhood Australia – <http://bit.ly/1glQpfG>, <http://bit.ly/1nlinNY>, <http://bit.ly/OnuslO>