

Reflective session - The Planning Cycle

PowerPoint Link:	The PowerPoint can be found on the ACECQA website		
Session title:	The Planning Cycle		
Date:			
Session time:		Session length:	1-2 hours (depending on discussion time)

Resources/Set up	Confirmed
Laptop or data projector and or access to a computer(if available)	
PowerPoint presentation	
Facilitator's notes	
Handout – Planning cycle infographic	
Copies of the Guide to the NQF	
Copies of the Approved Learning Frameworks	
Resources for activities and experiences e.g. whiteboard, paper, pens, textas, etc.	

Please note:

- Instructions and notes are in **[square brackets and bolded]**.
- Owing to its length, this session can be broken up into two or more reflective sessions.

National Quality Standard

Standard 1.3 Assessment and planning: Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

Element 1.3.1 Assessment and planning cycle: Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.

Standard 7.2 Leadership: Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

Element 7.2.2 Educational leadership: The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.

Element 7.2.3 Development of professionals: Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

Approved Learning Framework:

Principle 5 Ongoing learning and reflection

Speaking notes:	PowerPoint
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Welcome/introduction

Hello everyone. Thanks for joining me today. It's wonderful to have this opportunity to consider how we can improve our practice.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of this land and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging (and any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples here with us today).

Slide 1:



Overview

In this reflective session we'll be looking at the Planning Cycle. We will:

[read slide]

Slide 2:

Activity

We've all been quite busy, so let's take a moment for a reflective exercise while we have something to eat **[if you have offered food]**.

[Activity] Think back to a time when a learning experience you planned and implemented went well. This could be the restaurant you set up in the home corner, the songs you sang during a nappy change, or an obstacle course you put outside. Take a moment to reflect on what aspects of the experience went well.

Once you've spent some time thinking about this, have a chat with the person next to you about what makes a successful learning experience.

Let's take about 5 minutes to chat.

What you have just done is to highlight the importance of good quality planning.

Now let's share those reflections as a group, and see what we have come up with.

[Share people's reflections and identify key points. Add the following points if they didn't come up in discussion:

- **Strong links to an observation or children's interests.**
- **Carefully planned process.**
- **Challenging engagement.**
- **Well chosen, engaging resources used in the experience.**
- **Critical reflection played a part in the planning.**
- **Aimed at children's interests, knowledge, abilities and ideas.**
- **Skill development.]**

Slide 3



Planning Cycle

In our discussion we have touched on aspects of the planning cycle.

This image shows the main steps that make up the planning cycle

[Handout – Planning cycle infographic from the ACECQA website

Today we're going to reflect on each of these steps and break down what's involved in each and how it contributes to the overall planning.

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Importance of the planning cycle

Before we look at the steps in the planning cycle, let's think about why we need a planning cycle at all.

Let's take some time to think about this and chat together.

[Allow time for discussion, encouraging your team to think of possible answers.]

[Share people's reflections and identify key points.]

The planning cycle is a process of planning and documenting children's learning to ensure that you achieve the best quality outcomes for the children.

Element 1.3.1 of the National Quality Standard requires the use of the planning cycle to assess and evaluate each child's learning.

The planning cycle makes the learning visible to all involved when done well. When the learning is visible it promotes our practice and raises the profile of educators as professionals within the community.

Now let's work on the planning cycle together as we look at each section and work on an example.

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Observing/collecting information

The first step of the planning cycle is **observing and collecting information**. This is **what we see** each day.

It is when we collect and gather information about each child.

It can be done in many ways.

What are some of the ways you do this?

[Ask team members to call out suggestions.]

[Add the following examples if team members don't mention them:

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- formal observations, such as running records, time samples
- learning stories
- work samples
- photos
- discussions with children and families
- entries in daily journals
- information from data collected, such as enrolment forms, eat and rest charts.]

Critical reflection should be part of every step in the cycle. This involves thinking deeper and reviewing practice as a result. When critically reflecting on observations, we need to ask ourselves:

1. Is the observation giving me rich, meaningful information?
2. Is the observation focused on the child's strengths?
3. Is our documentation here relevant and meaningful to the child and family?

Video

We're going to watch a video of two children. Observe carefully, taking some notes for observations that we can use to develop a plan.

[Show the video on a screen or computer (click on the play button on the PowerPoint slide or copy the URL into an internet browser). If needed, allow some time for note taking after the viewing.]

Slide 7:



Record your observations

Now let's discuss the video.

[Allow some time for group discussion. Use these questions when needed as prompts for the discussion:

- What did you notice? What stands out for you?
- How were they engaged in the experience?
- How were they interacting with each other?
- What were they learning?
- How are what they were doing and learning different?
- If you were writing an observation, what style would you use?]

[You could add the following examples if the points raised aren't mentioned in the discussion:

Thomas

Thomas explores sound in the video. He uses both arms and bangs the different containers with his wooden mallets in a controlled manner. First loud and strong, and then gentle, small movements and soft sounds.

The different containers have different sounds (timbres). The sounds are random at first, but then develop into a pattern. He smiles as he does

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this. He looks to Jade and the adult off camera while making the sounds. He interacts with Jade and engages in her creation of a new sound.

Jade

Jade stands to the side with her fingers in her ears observing Thomas. She moves in to create her own sound. She explores the sounds and new ways to create different sounds. She communicates non-verbally but does say "It's like we are conducting" while waving around her metal beater. She flinches at the loud sounds.]

[If you have time, show the video again and have the group members observe for a second time and discuss with the person next to them.]

Analysing learning

The next step in the planning cycle is **Analysing the learning**.

This is **what we think** about the observation and the information gathered. It's when we make meaning of the observation. In other words: What does it tell us about the child?

This is where we use our knowledge as professionals to link the learning to the Approved Learning Frameworks and current research and theories.

When **critically reflecting** at this stage in the cycle we can explore concepts around why children behaved a specific way. By questioning and thinking more deeply you may discover some bias or hidden agenda. For example, as one of the girls doesn't use the computer very often, you may assume she doesn't know how or isn't interested. In fact it could be that she wants to but sees it as a male dominated area and she can't get a turn. This might result in highlighting a gender bias the service can address.

Now let's look at the process of analysing the learning in the video.

What does this gathered information from the video tell us about the child/children?

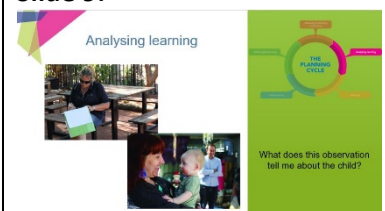
With the person next to you start to analyse your observations.

Break down the information into what you saw (the observation) and what you think or know (analysis).

As part of the analysis, look at answering the following questions **[you could write these on the smartboard or paper for everyone to see]:**

1. What learning is occurring and what happened to make you think this?
2. What learning dispositions are they developing?
3. What does the observation tell you about the child?
4. Can you link this to the Approved Learning Framework?
5. What does current research tell us about this learning? Is our understanding of the learning impacted by any new knowledge or theories in this area?

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Take about 10 minutes to do this.

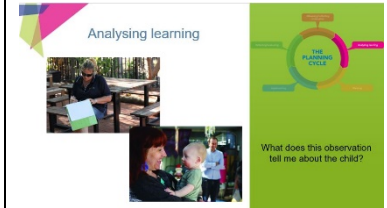
Let's look at our analysis together.

[Discuss what your team members' analysis was. Below are some points you could add if not mentioned in the discussion:

Both children in the video communicate their dispositions in their actions:

- Jade with her fingers in her ears and observing at the side, but also her curiosity by not leaving and staying to become involved in the sound-making.
- Thomas demonstrates his enthusiasm, confidence and commitment with his exploration of sounds.
- They both show a willingness to cooperate when their interests align.
- The learning occurring includes social skills and negotiation, exploration and problem-solving skills.
- Examples of dispositions in the video include: curiosity, perseverance and concentration, enthusiasm and exploration, commitment, confidence, cooperation, resilience.
- Both children are developing their understanding with their exploration in the video and start to develop a learning relationship together to extend their understanding and thinking.
- Learning processes in the video include: inquiry, problem solving, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating are developed in the learning experience.
- When linking the analysis, their learning and development to the Learning Outcomes, you could say that Thomas is a confident and involved learner (Outcome 4) as seen in his enthusiastic exploration of the different sounds. Although Jade uses very little language she communicates her thoughts and feelings effectively with non-verbal communication (Outcome 5). (If the team hasn't adequately made the links between the Learning Outcomes and their analysis, you should ask them to do so.)]

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Planning

The next step in the cycle is **planning** for the future learning.

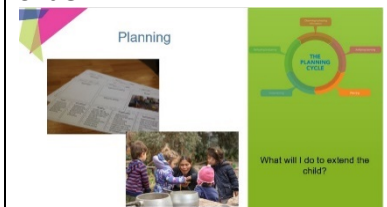
The 'reviewing and observing' stage in the planning cycle is what we see, so the planning stage is **what we do**.

After reviewing our observation and analysis, we now look at opportunities for future learning.

To form the basis for our planning we look at and use the child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and specific interests from the information we have gathered.

To begin our planning we need to identify a **specific intention**. This is

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when we work out our goal or objective for the plan. This links directly to the observation and analysis. What is the purpose for this plan? What is your 'intent' (Intentional teaching, 1.2.1) and what are you hoping to achieve?

Think about how you will do this, how you will engage the child and the resources you will need. Thinking about what teaching strategies you will use.

When **critically reflecting** at this stage, we could look at whether the plan is based on our perceived interests for learning or the child's interests, abilities and ideas. If the plan isn't successfully engaging or challenging the child, then maybe the problem is that it's based on our interests and knowledge, not theirs.

We could also ask: Generally, does our planning promote development in problem solving and higher-level thinking skills? How does this extend on the children's real interests, abilities and knowledge? This could lead to further learning on developing the overall curriculum to support dispositions of curiosity, investigation and problem solving.

So the planning stage is a bit clearer, please work with the person next to you to develop a possible plan based on your observation of the video and analysis of what you saw. This means, what other experiences could you provide for Thomas and Jade based on what you identified in your observation?

Think about:

- your intentions
- the learning outcomes you are working towards
- teaching strategies.

Let's take about 5-10 minutes to do this.

Let's look at our plans together.

[Discuss what your team members' plans were.]

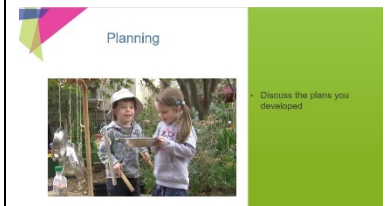
[Depending on the discussion, you could mention:

- **Further exploring sound and music – providing more experience with making sounds and music.**
- **Further exploring cause and effect.**
- **Developing social skills and communication.**
- **Further exploring and developing problem solving skills.**
- **Strengthening cooperative skills and group tasks/projects.**

Specific examples could include:

- **Providing more opportunities for sounds and music creation for Thomas. Supporting him to develop a way of recording and helping others to play his music.**
- **Jade's communication could be strengthened through project**

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work.]

Implementing

Implementing is the next step in the planning cycle and it is thinking about the plan and **how we actually do it**.

Here we would include the way we use the curriculum (program), the routine, interactions, environments and practice to support our plan and the children's learning.

Things to consider in our practice will obviously depend on which area we choose to develop in our plan.

Some examples could be the way we use our learning environment to engage the children with our set up. It could be:

- The use of thought provoking questions to inspire and engage children in a project.
- The way we structure groups that gives each child the opportunity for peer learning and knowledge sharing.
- Our encouragement of a child to reflect on their learning and how they could do things differently.
- The way we develop your relationships with the children and use our knowledge of the child to scaffold and extend their learning.

When **critically reflecting** at this stage we could look at whether our actual practice is reflecting the service philosophy, policies and practice. Does it support children's agency?

Spend a few minutes thinking about your implementation of the plan for the video. What practices and/or strategies will you use to ensure the plan is successful?

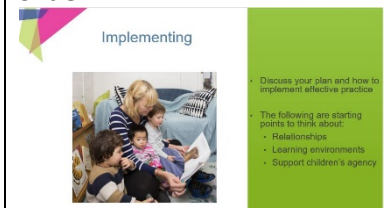
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[Discuss what your team members' plans were. Depending on the discussion, you could mention:

- **Plan to develop Thomas' interest in the music through co-construction of knowledge and questions to develop his ideas around recording his sounds/music, role modelling possible ways to record his music.**
- **Facilitating and supporting relationships with Jade and others will support her communication. Providing an engaging project that allows her to develop her interest and use her knowledge will develop her confidence and encourages communication.]**

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Reflecting/evaluating

The final step in the planning cycle is **reflecting and evaluating**, though it's not actually the last step as it is often the beginning of a new cycle.

Here we evaluate the learning that is occurring for the child. Our intentions, and where the child is in relation to the learning outcomes, is the starting point for the evaluation.

Then it is reflecting on the experience, how it went, were the outcomes achieved, the resources provided, and what we could improve on for next time.

We can reflect on any unanticipated outcomes. We can also reflect on our teaching strategies and use of educational practice. Does it reflect your philosophy on learning? How could we do things differently next time to extend the children's learning?

Critical Reflection can happen at any time in the cycle. As I mentioned earlier, it is the process of thinking more deeply about the decisions we make and our practice. This leads to action that improves the quality of the program for the children

It is a way for us to ask the 'big picture' questions, which helps us to identify improvements, strengthen professional practice and inform our practice. Through the process of critically reflecting as a team we develop a shared understanding, collectively raise our quality of practice and, in turn, try things in new ways.

Evaluating our plans for the video scenario is not easy to do as we haven't implemented our plans, but let's think about some of the areas we could look at.

Some possible questions that would provoke evaluation and reflection may be:

- How did the children engage with the learning? What did they learn? How do you know what they learnt?
- How could we extend their learning further?
- Could we add further resources to assist this?
- Did they respond well to our teaching practices?
- Were the outcomes achieved and how do we know?
- Could we improve or modify these?

Children's voices

Something to consider as part of the planning cycle is how we include and document children's voices in planning and evaluation.

The Approved Learning Frameworks (Outcome 1) and the NQS (Element 1.2.3) say that we need to foster children's sense of agency. When we invite children to make choices and decisions for planning, and comment

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Reflecting/evaluating

PLANNING CYCLE

How did it go? What I can I do better?

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Reflecting/evaluating

How would you evaluate?

What are some of the evaluation questions you would ask when you have implemented your plan for the video?

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Children's voices

How do we include and document children's voices in our planning, reflection and evaluation?

on the subsequent evaluation, they become active agents in their own learning and development

Let's spend a few minutes discussing ways we can include children's voices in our program.

[Ask team members to call out suggestions.]

[Add the following examples if team members don't mention them:

- **children's documentation**
- **reflections on their learning**
- **evaluation of a project, the program or specific interests within the curriculum**
- **the different ways we include the children's comments and their choices within the curriculum.]**

So, this brings us to the end of our reflective session.

I would like to thank each of you for your commitment to ongoing learning, quality outcomes for our children and families, and for working together to make a positive difference.

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Imagine the possibilities



Thank you for making a positive difference

Further information

Here are some places we can go for further support and information.

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Further information

ACECQA

Website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Email: enquiries@acecqa.gov.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ACECQA

Phone: 1300 422 327

