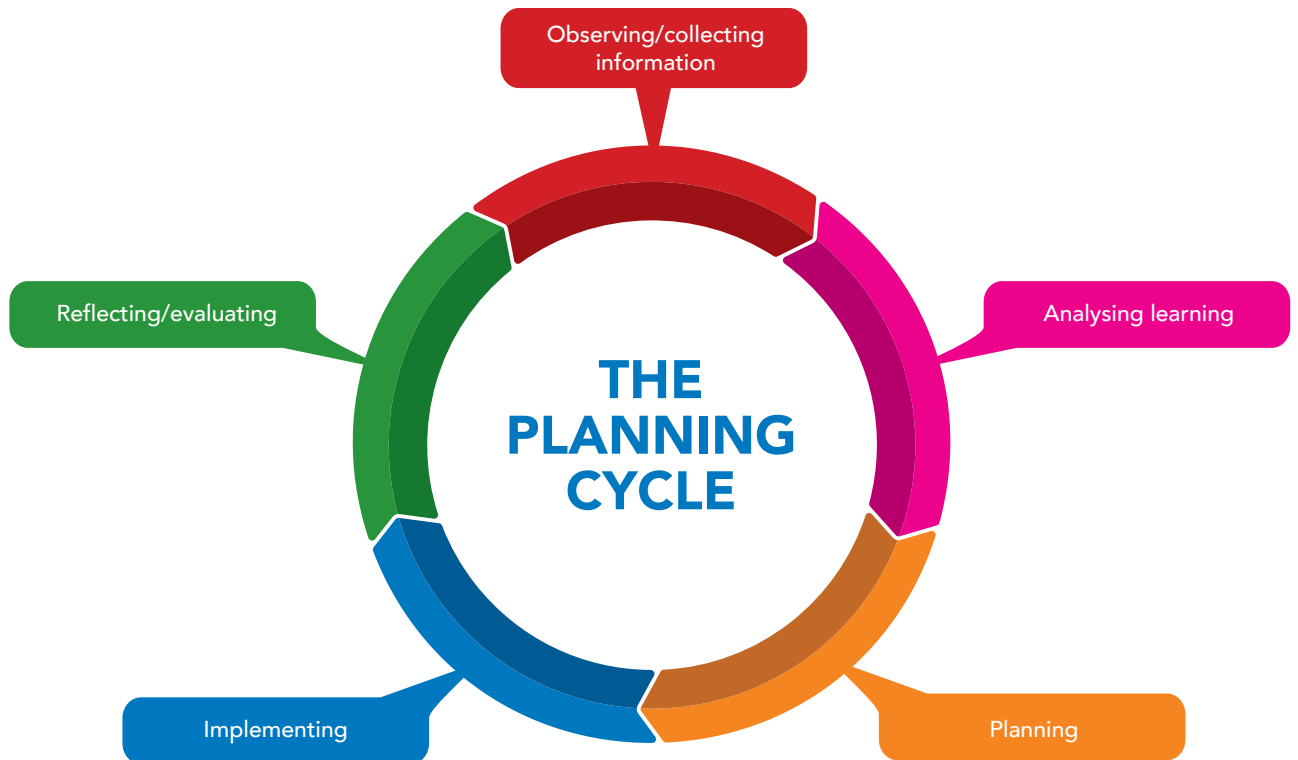


# Quality Area 1: Unpacking the planning cycle

This resource is adapted from ACECQA's blog, 'We hear you' - <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/>



Many educators find Element 1.3.1 – *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* – to be one of the most challenging.

Is it because educators struggle to articulate practice and why we document?

Is it that they are not sure about what is required in relation to Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice?

Or is it a question of not being sure about how to assess children's learning and development as part of a cycle of planning?

## Why do we document? Thinking through the what and the how of the cycle of planning for children's learning, wellbeing and development

When we think about planning, we should be thinking about the full planning cycle and keeping in mind that documentation is how you can show evidence of that process.

The focus should be on observing/collecting and analysing information that is:

- rich and meaningful, and not simply a description of what children are doing
- relevant to individual children, while capturing their identity, culture and what they are investigating and exploring
- focused on achievements and children's strengths, what children know, can do and understand.

Often we hear about educators and service leaders being caught up in the myth of what documentation and the planning cycle should look like, rather than knowing or understanding the requirements. While these are not new concepts, for some the purpose of documentation may have been lost along the way.

Let's revisit **why** it is important to engage in the cycle of planning, starting with the requirements of the NQS.

Quality Area 1 requires educators and coordinators to take a planned and reflective approach in designing and delivering the program for each child. This involves a wide range of practices including:

- observing children and gathering meaningful information about children's current knowledge, identity and culture to assess their learning and progress, a crucial step in planning meaningful learning experiences
- interpreting this information and setting goals for individual and group learning
- involving families and children in decision-making
- planning for further learning that supports children as capable, competent people with agency and the ability to make choices and decisions
- engaging with the principles, practices and outcomes of Approved Learning Frameworks
- critically reflecting on children's learning and development in a collaborative way with colleagues to affirm and challenge practices.

Now let's move to **what** is required under Quality Area 1 to inform the planning cycle.

The Education and Care Services National Law requires services to deliver a program that is based on an Approved Learning Framework and takes into account the learning needs and interests of each child (Section 168). Assessments or evaluations are also expected to support the delivery of the program for children according to the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

For children preschool age and under the focus is on:

- assessments of developmental needs, interests, experiences, participation and progress against the outcomes of the program (Regulation 74(1a)).

For school age children the focus is on:

- evaluation of the child's wellbeing, development and learning (Regulation 74(1b)).

In either case, the amount of documentation depends on how often and for how long children attend a service (Regulation 74(2a)). The program must be displayed (Regulation 75a) and information about the content, operation and the child's participation must be provided to families on request (Regulation 76).

The *EYLF in Action: Educators' stories and models for practice* provides a wide range of examples and techniques for recording and documenting the planning cycle, including journals, jottings, electronic records and online programs.

In thinking about why we plan and document the way we do, you might want to consider the following questions at your next team meeting:

- How do you currently document and why do you do it the way you do?
- What theories inform the ways you organise your documentation? (Refer to the *Educators' Guide to the EYLF*, p.54-57, and *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care*, p.21-24).
- How have you critically reflected on and evaluated the program?

## Gathering meaningful information, questioning and interpreting the learning

Consider the information you are collecting, how meaningful it is and the way it is analysed and used to interpret each child's learning. It is important to remember the reason you are collecting information - it needs to add value to outcomes for children.

The following series of vignettes present examples across a range of different ages. Below each case study are questions to encourage educators to focus on the meaningful aspects that might inform the planning cycle. They showcase a range of methods and techniques of collecting information, as well as questions and ideas to draw out learning. Remember, there is no one way of documenting – these vignettes are presented as just one example of the planning cycle.

### Jotting in FDC communication journal - Jade, aged 12 months

Jade was joined by Monique, who she greeted with a smile which was returned by Monique. Both children were very engaged and began to laugh.

Monique reached out to Jade with both hands several times, laughing and smiling each time. Jade responded by connecting her hands the next time Monique reached out. Their game continued for approximately 10 minutes as their excitement and enthusiasm grew.

**Family response:** That is so beautiful! Jade has been really enjoying some clapping songs we have been singing at home.

#### Questioning and interpreting the learning:

- What does this information tell us about the way children under three learn?
- How does this learning affect the way we plan opportunities and environments?
- How can we further support Jade in transferring and adapting learning and support her agency and interactions?
- How can this best be documented?

## Learning journal entry - Bihn, aged 3.5 years

Bihn has recently demonstrated a sustained interest in sandpit play. He actively initiates and contributes to play experiences emerging from his own ideas and extends on his own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration. He is resourceful in his play and often uses recyclable materials that he confidently manipulates to experiment with cause and effect, trial and error, and motion. Bihn demonstrates perseverance in his play and regularly shares his achievements with familiar educators, explaining the construction and design process. Recently he has shown interest in tunneling and compounding wet sand to create sand sculptures that represent pyramids.

Bihn is also beginning to show interest in other children and responds positively to others during sandpit play. He regularly engages in and contributes to shared play experiences and demonstrates growing confidence in exploring and engaging with his social and physical environments through relationships and play. He voices his ideas and is developing his ability to increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others to share job roles and negotiate the use of equipment. Bihn also enjoys moments of solitude in sandpit play and actively uses the sensory experience to assist with this increasing capacity for self-regulation.

**Family conversations:** Bihn's father shared that Bihn recently received a book from his grandmother about Ancient Egypt. Bihn's grandmother has just returned from a holiday and has spent time talking to Bihn about her experiences; he was particularly keen to hear all about the desert and the sand. He has since been very interested in the pyramids with their hidden tunnels and passageways. Bihn's father also mentioned he was displaying an interest in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. Bihn's grandmother has a papyrus print with hieroglyphics from her travels.

### Questioning and interpreting the learning:

- What does this information tell us about Bihn's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing?
- How can we build on the knowledge and understandings that Bihn has developed?
- How can we support Bihn's increasing capacity for self-regulation and provide opportunities for him to engage independently with tasks and play?
- How can this best be documented?

The Approved Learning Frameworks emphasise assessing, planning and documenting children’s learning, development and wellbeing, enabling 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
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing toward realising learning outcomes and, if not, what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may need additional support to achieve particular learning outcomes, providing that support or assisting 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 this context and these children (EYLF, p.17/FSAC, p.16).

The Educators’ Guides to the Approved Learning Frameworks support educators to engage in the planning cycle, with a particular focus on completing the cycle by assessing and evaluating learning and wellbeing. This is a key component of the process and involves educator decision-making about the educational program and practice. It involves setting goals and planning experiences, interactions and environments that build on children’s interests, abilities and identities in relation to the learning outcomes.

At this stage, it is helpful to revisit the series of vignettes. Here, each example showcases a number of methods and techniques to collect information, as well as the addition of goals, plans and the evaluation of learning and wellbeing.

## Jotting in FDC communication journal - Jade, aged 12 months

### Additional entry: planning and evaluation

**Planning and goal setting:** I have really reflected on planning for the children under three and looked at ways of creating more opportunities for me to observe and support the wonderful learning that is occurring. I have looked at de-cluttering the environment and creative arts activities to free up opportunities for me to have more one on one interaction, or with pairs of children, and to sing and play rhyming and clapping games. I have asked families to share any rhymes they enjoy in their families to reflect and honour diversity.

My goals for Jade are to encourage her confidence as a learner and facilitate opportunities for her to lead some of the rhyming and clapping games with her peers.

**Evaluation:** My strategies have really opened up a greater flow in the program for children under three. Jade has had many opportunities to lead rhyming games, becoming a popular partner in a range of games with Toby, Lucy and Thomas.



## Learning journal entry - Bihn, aged 3.5 years

### Additional entry: planning and evaluation

**Planning and goal setting:** Foster continuity of learning from Bihn's home environment and build on foundations of prior learning through responsiveness to strengths, skills and knowledge.

Intentional teaching-scaffolding, open-questioning, engaging in shared thinking and problem-solving are all methods we can use to extend Bihn's thinking and learning.

**Evaluation:** The sensory tasks provided children with time and space to engage in individual pursuits and develop their increasing capacity for self-regulation. An interesting point to consider, and perhaps engage in some action research: What role do the senses play in development?

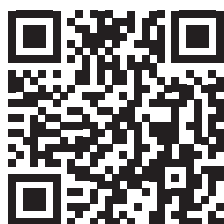
The hieroglyphic activity was a rich language opportunity to explore culturally constructed symbol systems. Looking forward, we can extend Bihn's interest in making meaning using a range of media and enhance his understanding about how symbols and pattern systems work.

### Thoughts and ideas for your next team/educator meeting:

- Where are we in terms of our individual and collective team skills and knowledge about the planning cycle?
- What does this mean for individual and collective professional development plans?



## Further Readings

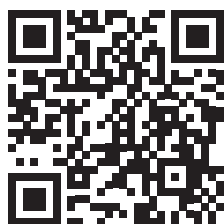
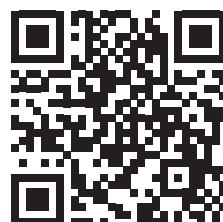


### **Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework**

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22816>

### **Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care**

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/25691>

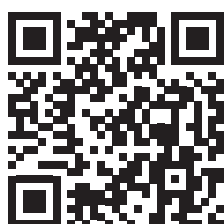


### **EYLF in Action: Educators' stories and models for practice**

[https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/eylf\\_in\\_action\\_-\\_educators\\_stories\\_and\\_models\\_for\\_practice\\_0.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/eylf_in_action_-_educators_stories_and_models_for_practice_0.pdf)

### **ACECQA Information sheet: Guidelines for documenting children's learning**

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/25411>



### **ACECQA helps unlock the door on documentation**

<https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2014/05/20/acecqa-helps-unlock-the-door-on-documentation/>

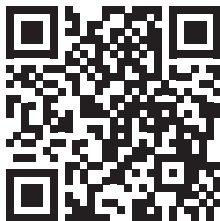


**ACECQA 'We Hear You' – How we document: Albury Out of School Hours Care**

<https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2015/05/21/how-we-document-albury-out-of-school-hours/>

**Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: Practice Principle Guide – Assessment for Learning and Development**

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/pracguideassessmenttforlearning2017.docx>



**Early Childhood Australia – Planning and documentation video series**

<https://www.echr.edu.au/resources/detail/index/talking-about-practice-planning-and-documentation>

**ACECQA 'We hear you' – Cycle of planning**

<https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2015/11/28/cycle-of-planning/>



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