

# Reflective session – Critical reflection

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<b>PowerPoint Link:</b>	The PowerPoint can be found on the ACECQA website		
<b>Session title:</b>	Critical Reflection		
<b>Date:</b>			
<b>Session time:</b>		<b>Session length:</b>	50 minutes

Resources/set up:	Confirmed
Laptop or data projector and/or access to a computer (if available)	
PowerPoint presentation (if being used)	
Speaking notes	
Handout: QA1 Info sheet: developing a culture of learning through reflection	
Copies of the Guide to the NQF	
Copies of the Approved Learning Frameworks EYLF and/or FSAC	
Resources for activities and experiences (if required), e.g. post it notes, whiteboard, large pieces of paper, pens, textas, etc.	
ACECQA's Quest for Quality game	

## 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 1.3.2 Critical reflection:** Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.

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

**Element 7.2.3 Development of professionals:** Educators, coordinators 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 reflective practice



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Speaking notes:	PPT
<p><b>Welcome/Introduction</b></p> <p>Hi everyone, thanks for joining me today. It's exciting to be working together to improve on practice.</p> <p>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 joining us today).</p>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>In this reflective session we will <b>(read slide):</b></p>	
<p><b>Remember</b></p> <p>It's been a busy day/week, so I thought before we begin we could take a moment to reflect on how your day or week went over some nibbles <b>(if you have offered food).</b></p> <p><b>(Activity)</b> Think back over your day or the week, and choose something that you really enjoyed doing at work. Maybe it was a new experience with the children that was well received. Maybe you learnt something from each other that you decided to have a go at. Or it could have been an 'aha' moment for one of your children that you shared with a family.</p> <p>When thinking about this special moment, have a chat with the person next to you about this highlight and explain what happened. <b>Let's take about 5 minutes to chat.</b></p>	

## Reflective practice

What we've just been doing is a form of reflection which we all call remembering or reminiscing. This is different to reflective practice though.

The good news is that 'reflective practice' is something that each of us does on a daily basis: We make hundreds of decisions every day with, about, and for our children. We implement experiences based on our observations of what children enjoy doing, what they're capable of, and their emerging skills that they may need support with. This is what reflective practice is all about.

Let's think about that special memory you just shared. Now think about what made it a special moment, who was involved in the moment, when did it happen, has it happened before, what's the likelihood of it happening again, and would you like it to happen again?

Once you have done this, – you've made the leap from a memory of an experience to reflecting on that experience.

Donald Schon, the author of *The Reflective Practitioner*, says we engage in three types of reflection – reflection *in* action, reflection *on* action and reflection *for* action. (**Handout - QA1 Info sheet: developing a culture of learning through reflection**).



Reflection in action is what we do spontaneously throughout the day. We might add materials or ask questions to extend children's thinking, or we might change a strategy that we feel isn't working.

### What is critical reflection?

So what's the difference between reflecting and *critically* reflecting?

When we reflect on an action we begin to think more deeply about what happened and the 'why' behind it. This deeper thinking is called 'critical reflection'. It can take place at the time of the event, but usually takes place after the event.

The National Quality Standard and the Approved Learning Frameworks all require us to engage in critically reflective practice

So what does this actually mean?

**(Activity)** To find out let's do another activity; I'm going to give some of you a copy of the Guide to the NQF and others a copy of the Early Years Learning Framework **(or if applicable the Framework for School Age Care or Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework)**. Find a partner or form a group and discover where the term 'critical reflection' is identified in each. (Hint: In the Guide to the NQF, take a look at the NQS summary on pages 90-91 and then turn to the relevant section in the NQS for further information). When you have found this, choose two words that you feel form part of the definition of critical reflection. **(Allow 5-10 minutes for this activity and then**



**invite a team member to write these words on a whiteboard or large piece of paper. Read these out).**

As you may have seen, in the Guide to the NQF, 'critical reflection' was identified under Quality Area 1 of the NQS, in particular:

**Standard 1.3 Assessment and planning:** *Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.* **Element 1.3.2 Critical reflection:** *Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation (p.129).* This draws our attention to the importance of engaging in critical reflection to drive our program planning and the assessment and planning cycle.

It's also included as one of the three new exceeding themes that services need to demonstrate for a standard to be rated Exceeding NQS. Did anyone find these? They're at the end of each Quality Area in the Guide to the NQF. It's **Exceeding Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection.** When practice is informed by critical reflection, we consider, question, analyse and re-evaluate planning and decision-making for that standard. This supports a culture of ongoing self-assessment that helps identify continuous improvement and improved outcomes for children, families, and for us.

In the EYLF (or FSAC or VEYLDF), you'll have seen that it's in the principles, practices or learning outcomes. Reflective practice is identified as one of the key five principles of early childhood

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pedagogy identified in the EYLF on page 13 and the FSAC on page 11 that underpins practice. In fact it's **Principle 5 - Ongoing learning and reflective practice**. These principles reflect contemporary theories and research evidence about children's learning. They tell us about what we do, focusing on assisting our children to work toward achieving the learning outcomes.

So, critical reflection is looking at the 'why' behind all the decisions we make. It's about thinking more deeply, honestly and critically about our professional practices. For example, why we made the decision to interact this way, to implement this experience or to apply this approach or practice.

When we critically reflect we're identifying our thoughts and feelings, drawing on our philosophy about how children learn, and questioning if or how this connects with our early childhood knowledge and the knowledge we have of our children.

The Approved Learning Frameworks explain that critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. The focus is also on implications for equity and social justice (EYLF, pp.13- 45, FSAC; pp.11- 41, VEYLDF; pp.8).

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### **Video 1**

In this video we'll hear from Catherine Lee, Director of The Point Preschool, which has an overall rating of Exceeding the NQS. While watching it, compare your thoughts on critical reflection with those shared by Catherine. **(Either click on the image in the**



slide to view the video or on the link underneath the image which will take you to the YouTube clip. It runs for 2 mins and 6 secs.)

As Catherine mentioned, critical reflection allows us to step back and notice. We can look at a practice, situation or event and identify how we feel about it, what went well, what didn't go so well, and what we could do differently. It also helps us to consider whether our practices are guided by our philosophy.

Being critically reflective also includes sharing perspectives with each other and our families. This way we discover other points of view and open ourselves up to different ways of doing things.

Some examples of practices or topics we might find that we have different perspectives on could include our lunchtime or rest time practices, the use of nappies in the preschool room, dummies and so on **(invite your educators to identify topics relevant to your setting)**.

### Different perspectives

The Approved Learning Frameworks encourage us to show a commitment to ongoing learning and reflective practice. The aim is to build our professional knowledge.

When we express our views, listen to each other and critically reflect on why we made the decisions we made, we're opening our minds to new ideas, possible solutions and new ways of doing things.



Let me just say that I like to think of our team as a professional learning community. I believe we openly share and respect each other's opinions and it's my role to ensure that everyone feels safe to do this. I am committed to supporting you all to be part of a strong reflective and collaborative team of professionals, and to ensure everyone has a voice and everyone feels heard.

As the quote on the slide reads **(read quote)**. We're a diverse group of professionals with different experiences, views and knowledge. I might do something one way and you might do something a different way, but our common goal is quality outcomes for our children and families. If we discover through sharing that there's a different way of doing something that might result in a better outcome, then we should consider and possibly adopt this way.

Critical reflection should lead to action. It's more likely to lead to change when we do it together. **(Activity)** Lets group together to share our perspectives on the relevant scenario on the slide **(FDC or LDC)**. We will reflect in pairs or as a group on how we feel about the scenario, what we know and what theories we can draw from, what our initial reaction would be in terms of what we want to do and then what we would actually do. **(On a large piece of paper or whiteboard jot down and read out the titles: 'How do you feel?' (about the scenario) , 'What do you know?' (theories on rough and tumble play or risky play with loose parts and natural materials), 'What do you want to do?', and 'What would you do?'** Invite everyone to share their knowledge and

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**ideas and write these up as they are shared. Allow 10-15 minutes for this activity, including sharing.)**

**(Read out what was shared).** Let's look at 'What do you know'. Did you learn something new or were you reminded of a theory? Did this sharing knowledge of theories encourage any of you to reconsider your initial reaction to the scenario? In what way? This is one of the benefits of engaging in critical reflection.

### **Why critically reflect?**

Now we know the difference between reflection and critical reflection, let's think about the benefits of being critically reflective.

When we reflect on our programs and practices and the principles that guide them, we're engaging in ongoing learning and being thoughtful about our work.

When we critically reflect we're closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives with a focus on implications for equity, inclusion and diversity. It takes reflective practice to a deeper level where we analyse what happened and why.

This drives our program planning and implementation and our commitment to providing quality experiences for our children.

Part of our commitment to quality improvement includes looking for opportunities to raise the overall quality of the service's



education and care experiences for children. Critical reflection involves gaining insight into other perspectives to build on our knowledge and skills. The aim is to strengthen our own professional practice, identify improvements and inform the decisions we make.

The process of critical reflection helps us to think deeply about our practices, acknowledge our strengths and continue learning and strengthening our program. Putting critical reflection into practice is part of an ongoing cycle of building, testing and re-building theories about teaching and learning.

Critical reflection also allows us to ask bigger questions such as, 'Who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged when I work this way?' (EYLF, p.14, FSAC, p.12).

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### **What could we critically reflect on?**

There are many events, practices, processes, experiences and topics we could reflect upon in our service. This slide identifies just a few examples to consider.

They include:

- How our observations of children's learning and development influence our educational programs.
- How our pedagogy (professional practice) connects with the principles, practices and outcomes of the Approved Learning Frameworks.



- How effective our induction and orientation processes for new families and children are at building collaborative partnerships and a sense of belonging from the beginning.
- How we encourage families and our community to share ideas and provide feedback.

### How do you do it?

Think back to the fond memory you shared at the beginning of this session.

Now use this reflection and go a little deeper. This is when the questions ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ can be introduced. Think about why you responded the way you did to the child in the situation, how you felt about the moment, why you made certain decisions, what influenced your actions, and which theoretical perspectives you drew upon in your decision-making.

For example, an ‘aha’ moment for a toddler trying to complete a puzzle. You noticed her becoming frustrated as she unsuccessfully attempted to complete the puzzle. When you sat down with her you noticed that it was a large inset puzzle with interconnecting pieces and you decided to introduce a different puzzle you felt would be more suitable. You supported her to complete the puzzle without doing it for her and shared in her joy when she was successful.

Why did you respond that way? You drew on your knowledge of child development and children's capabilities, as well as what you knew about this particular child.



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**(Activity)** Now turn to the same person you shared your moment with at the beginning of this session and try delving deeper into the *why* behind your decisions, whether you would have done it differently, and what you might do next **(allow 5 minutes)**.

We can also use the reflective questions in the EYLF to prompt our thinking, such as: ‘Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?’ (p.13).

### Let’s do it!

Reflective practice, including critical reflection, needs to be an ongoing process and I’m here to support you with this.

It’s important to make the time and be provided with opportunities to reflect every day and to critically reflect regularly. We could reflect in our daily diaries or personal reflective journals, as well as in our regular meetings.

Let’s think about ways and times we can have these reflective conversations. It could be a quick chat between shifts, at rest time, before or after work, or during meetings. **(For FDC:)** On the phone to other FDC educators, during coordinator visits, or at meetings.

Sometimes it can be difficult for all of us to get together to critically reflect as a group. You might like to partner with another member of the team who could become a mentor or critical friend who’d be available to share their thoughts on a topic, observation or event.



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The Approved Learning Frameworks (Outcome 1) and the NQS (1.2.3) say that we need to foster children’s sense of agency. When we invite children to reflect they become active agents in their own learning and we recognise that they have a right to, and are capable of, making decisions that affect them.

When we reflect with families we acknowledge that they are their child’s first and most significant educator. So what we need to do is to get them to reflect on our program and discover how we can work together to support their child’s learning and development.

Also, when we reflect with our community we can gain an understanding of what our service looks like from their perspective. This feedback can also inform the decisions we make.

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## **Video 2**

In the previous slide we looked at ways we could embed critical reflection in our everyday practices.

In this video we’ll hear again from Catherine, the director of The Point Preschool. She takes us through the process of evaluation, the way her team embed critical reflection in their practice, and how they overcome the challenges. **(Either click on the image in the slide to view the video or on the link underneath the image which will take you to the YouTube clip. It runs for 2 mins and 34 secs).**

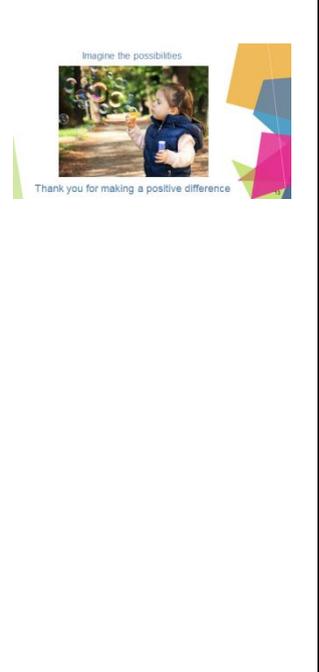


**Conclusion**

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

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

On the next slide there are some suggested readings. Let me know if you have any questions, or want to make any comments or suggestions.



**Further Readings**

Here are some resources we can refer to for support on critical reflection.

