



## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



### Connecting with practice—EYLF and NQS

## General information

**Note:** Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has developed a collection of vignettes and accompanying notes to be used to promote discussion and critical reflection among educators. The information that follows applies to all of the vignettes and will help you use them with other educators. In addition, there is a set of notes for each vignette. Both sets of notes will help you use the vignettes effectively.

### Aims

To help educators to:

- think more deeply about practice through discussion and debate
- interpret practice from different perspectives
- make links between the different interpretations and how they influence practice
- plan 'what next' actions
- become more aware of the interconnectedness between the Learning Outcomes, Practices and Principles in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF), the *National Quality Standards* (NQS) Standards and Elements and discussions about practice and apply this understanding to their practice.

The vignettes have been chosen to illustrate experiences occurring in early childhood settings that relate directly to ideas in the EYLF and the NQS. They have not been chosen to depict excellent practice but rather to provoke discussion and to support 'a lively culture of professional inquiry' (EYLF, p. 13 and *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, p. 119). This is a very important point—the aim is not to criticise, on the one hand, what the vignettes depict, or to see them as identifying 'how things should be done'. An important role and challenge for a facilitator of discussion around the vignettes is to ensure that the discussion does not centre on either 'liking' or 'not liking' what educators do.

### Context

Each vignette takes place in a particular service type and a specific context. Good practice is responsive to the contexts of each setting. Discussions about the vignettes will be limited by not knowing the specific contexts—the children, the educators and what preceded the vignette, as well as other information.



However, educators can gain valuable perspectives and insights that apply to their own setting and age group when they use the vignettes as a basis for reflection, discussion and taking action.

## Using the vignettes

The vignettes can be used by individuals but are likely to be more useful when used jointly with other educators. The focus for discussion is on what and how children are learning and educators' roles and contribution to the learning.

There are many helpful ways to facilitate a discussion among educators. Knowing the educators you're working with will help you to tailor the discussion. Watch the vignette at least once before you use it with others. Think carefully about the experience and understandings of the educators who will take part in the discussion, as the vignette can be approached at different levels, from introductory to more advanced. The questions and suggestions for discussion vary in complexity, ranging from descriptive to analytical, requiring deep, critical reflection.

Emphasise to the group that a helpful and successful discussion has to involve welcoming, listening to and respecting different perspectives. Encourage everyone to contribute. Everyone can learn from each other. Establish at the beginning that only one person talks at a time.

Point out at the beginning and throughout the discussion that people will see the vignette differently because our perspectives are informed by our values and experiences. This is true in our work as well.

Questions and notes to help with discussion follow. You can use all, some or none of them. Choose ones that fit your purpose and that progress the discussion. Think of your own questions and follow the lead of participants. The aim is to take the discussion beyond the obvious to explore issues, ideas and questions more deeply and then to use the discussion to inform practice in your setting.

Show the vignette as many times as participants want, but start by showing it and asking participants to just look and listen, to focus on what they see and hear initially, without critiquing. Over the course of the discussion you may need to show the vignette three or more times.

**Keep in mind that the learning from using the vignette comes not from the vignette itself but from the discussion it prompts.**

For more information on facilitating discussion groups, see the *EYLF PLP Learning Circles* handout.

Further guidance is available from *Thinking about practice: Working with the Early Years Learning Framework* by Jenni Connor.

## General guidelines for all vignettes

The format for using and discussing each vignette follows a similar pattern over three viewings. The first viewing focuses on initial responses, describing what is happening, what children and educators are doing and the context. For some of the vignettes, the suggestion in the notes is that you look at the vignette from parents' perspectives and think about how they might see the situation. In other vignettes you are asked to take the child's perspective.

The discussion of the second viewing focuses on what and how children are learning and what is supporting or interfering with their learning. You are encouraged to link what is observed with the EYLF and the NQS.

The third viewing invites consideration of links with the Vision, Principles and Practices in the EYLF. You are asked to think about and discuss what has been learnt from the discussion and what actions you will take.



### First viewing:

Ask participants to watch and listen.

The aim of the discussion after the first showing is to keep it at the descriptive level—that is, to avoid making judgments or being critical.

Then ask each participant questions such as:

- *What stands out for you in that vignette? What did you notice? What was happening? Who was involved?*

**Note:** Inevitably some participants will focus mostly on the educator/s in the vignettes and others may focus mostly on children's experiences. This is a good time to note that the information and examples under the EYLF Outcomes focus both on children's learning and on educators' practice.

Then ask something like:

- *Why do we see different things when we look at the same vignette?*

Before showing the vignette again, suggest that participants focus on what and how children are learning. Mention the distinction between what children are doing and what they are learning, and remind participants that the focus is on learning.

## Second viewing:

The aim of the second viewing is to look more deeply at learning and teaching and the links with the NQS.

**Ask:** What evidence of learning in the areas described in the Learning Outcomes do you see?

The Learning Outcomes in the EYLF will help to identify the learning that is occurring. Identifying what children may be learning requires analysing and interpreting what is happening. What children are learning may or may not be what the educator has planned and it is important for educators to be alert to learning that they may not have expected.

- *Are the children deeply engaged in what is going on?*
- *How can you tell if they are or are not?*
- *What about children's agency?*
- *What evidence of children as active partners and collaborators in their own and others' learning can you see?*

**Note:** Point out the connections among the Learning Outcomes—that is, that evidence of learning in one Outcome area is likely to indicate evidence of learning in others.

Ask participants to identify connections with Standards and particular Elements in the NQS and highlight their interconnectedness. Then suggest that they watch again and focus on the educators' roles in the experience.

## Third viewing:

- *What roles does the educator play?*
- *What Practices does the educator's role illustrate?*
- *What Principles are illustrated in the educator's practice?*
- *How is the educator supporting and extending children's learning?*
- *What intentional teaching is going on here?*
- *What does the vignette show about the educator's relationships with the children?*
- *How do the conversations between the educator and children support and extend the children's learning?*
- *If you were the educator in this vignette, what might you have learned from this experience? How might you follow it up?*

- *What might you record from this vignette about the children's learning or the experience itself? How might this experience contribute to your assessment of the children in the vignette and the learning opportunities you offer?*
- *If you were the educator, what action might you take as a result of observing this learning experience?*
- *What have we learned that we can apply to our workplace from the discussion we've just had?*
- *What action will we take?*

## Important concepts

In each vignette in which an educator is involved, you may want to focus some discussion on the particular teaching techniques used. One list of techniques is contained in *Techniques for teaching young children*, 3rd edition (MacNaughton & Williams, 2010).

Keep in mind the broad definition of 'curriculum' in the EYLF: All of the child's experiences and the complex way each of the Standards and Elements in the NQS connect with each other and with the EYLF Vision, Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes.

Remember that actions can be more than planning new activities, repeating old ones or extending them. They can be:

- *a conversation you'll have with a child or group of children and/or with a family member or colleagues*
- *a change you might make in the environment*
- *an interaction*
- *a change to the way a routine happens*
- *something you noticed about a child that you'll look for more closely in the future.*

## Reference

MacNaughton, G. & Williams, G. (2010). *Techniques for teaching young children*, 3rd edn. South Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman)



An Australian Government Initiative

The NQS Professional Learning Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education.



Brought to you by

**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children