

Resource Sheet

LONG-TERM PROJECTS

Acknowledgement



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As of 1 January 2013, Gowrie Victoria commenced as the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) for Victoria. Gowrie Victoria is committed to ensuring continuity of quality support to services and has commenced a planned transition to ensure this occurs. As part of this transition, and in partnership CCC, services can access a number of resources as developed by CCC.

LONG-TERM PROJECTS

One of the many positives about children's services is that many children attend on permanent days each week over a long period of time, making it easy to have long-term projects. The possibilities for these are endless.

A few examples of long-term projects are:

- planning and preparing for a community event such as a family evening
- setting up a pen pal arrangement with children overseas or even in another state
- making a scrapbook about the service and adding to it over the year
- planting and maintaining a garden
- writing and performing a play
- creating a mural
- rearranging the space in which the service operates and evaluating the effectiveness of the change
- conducting a simple charity drive.

Children need to be enthusiastic about any long-term project they will be motivated to complete it. When children feel empowered and see themselves as collaborators with educators in planning and implementing experiences, they will have ideas and make suggestions, which should be encouraged.

At other times educators will get an idea from noticing what children are talking about and showing interest in. Educators will need to make sure that the project is realistic, achievable and appropriate, and that resources needed are available. It is important however, for educators to do this without taking ownership away from children.

What is a long-term project?

Typically it is a varied collection of experiences that are related, that have an outcome and that take place over days, weeks or even months. The project may be altered as time passes, but it begins with an idea and a plan.

Some projects in children's services may be sufficiently complex that over time they involve all the children, while others may be more contained and involve only a few children.

Characteristics of successful long-term projects in children's services

Children of any age gain satisfaction from making a real contribution, doing something that benefits others. This nurtures a sense of belonging and helps the child and others appreciate his or her skills and talents. Many long-term projects offer this opportunity.

Successful long-term projects typically have the following characteristics:

- the idea comes initially from the group, or if not, is enthusiastically adopted by the group
- children lead and take responsibility
- the project is sufficiently 'open' so that children who do not come to the children's service every day can still join in. It is important that children who are leading the project do not see participation as limited to certain people, but allow others to join in as they are interested
- it is accepted that interest and enthusiasm may wax and wane – that is, there are no requirements to participate
- deadlines are realistic, so that there is every chance of success
- the project is open and contains varied tasks, so that children of different ages and with different skills can make a genuine contribution.

Value of long-term projects

An excellent long-term project shares many qualities with all good experiences in children's services because it can:

- give more mature children the opportunity to exercise leadership over a period of time
- usually has variety built into it, so that children can choose not only whether or not to be involved but how
- often contribute to or benefit others, which nurtures a sense of community
- help children learn patience, organisational skills, cooperation, negotiation, perseverance
- enable children to exercise leadership in a variety of ways
- give children an opportunity to engage in long-term planning
- require teamwork and collaboration among children of the same, and different, ages

- appeal to all ages and both genders
- require a range of skills and talents to be successful
- help to identify new talents and skills
- involve challenges
- result in strong feelings of satisfaction and achievement on part of those who contributed (if the project has been successful!).

‘When children participate collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences, and have opportunities to contribute to decisions, they learn to live interdependently. [This can be observed through] children being able to revisit group projects and play over extended periods of time, and [the Educators] participating in children’s group play and projects and supporting children to be responsible for and to share decision-making within the group’

(Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010, p. 92)

Points to consider

There are a number of considerations for educators in relation to a long-term project:

- Is it realistic to expect that we can do this successfully and in the time we have (if there is a completion date)?
- Can we handle having this project and still offering other kinds of opportunities – that is, can we avoid having the project dominate the program over a period of time?
- Do we have enough space for children to work on this project and still offer other experiences so that children have choices?
- If the children’s service does not operate in dedicated space, can this project be packed away and set up again each day?
- Is the session flexible, with big ‘chunks’ of time rather than brief segments, so that children can really get involved? Dividing the session into small segments will interfere with children’s engagement, as they are likely to have the attitude that they will have to stop before they’re ready – it’s best not to engage too strongly in the first place.
- Do we have the materials and resources?
- Are there ways we can involve people outside the service (for example, family members, school personnel, members of the community) to help make this project successful?

It is critical to evaluate the project along the way. This gives children a valuable opportunity to experience revising plans, reassessing goals, being flexible, dealing with success and failure, and thinking creatively. Perhaps build discussion into group meetings about the project or hold special meetings of those most involved to discuss how it is going.

Reference:

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010. *Draft Guide to the National Quality Standard Education and Care Services - Centre-based and family day care*, Barwon, ACT.

Further reading:

Department of Human Services, 2004, *Shared Visions: Resource Kit for Outside School Hours Care*, Department of Human Services, Melbourne

Chapter 6: Planning and evaluating OSHC programs

Fact sheet 1: Working with mixed age groups

Fact sheet 9: Connecting OSHC with the community

Fact sheet 12: Documentation and planning

Fact sheet 15: Services for older children