



## National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program



### Connecting with practice—EYLF and NQS

## Vignette: Young toddlers' learning

**Note:** Use these notes in conjunction with the [General information](#) sheet for *Connecting with practice*.

### Overview:

This vignette shows several young toddlers using a rich learning environment in a variety of ways.

### Possible focus points:

- role of the physical environment in supporting learning
- educators' contributions to learning through communicating with language
- identity and belonging
- photos as valuable prompts for learning.

Note: As the number of links to the *National Quality Standard* (NQS) and *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) listed below indicate, this vignette is a snapshot of a few minutes in a babies' and toddlers' room. Rather than having one particular focus, it depicts a number of dimensions of good quality practice and allows for discussion about different aspects of the curriculum.



### Key links to the NQS:

#### Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

**Element 1.1.1:** Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.

**Element 1.1.3:** All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

**Element 1.2.3:** Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.

#### Quality Area 3: Physical environment

**Element 3.2.1:** Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.

**Element 3.2.2:** Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.

#### Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

**Element 5.1.1:** Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

**Element 5.2.1:** Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.

## Key EYLF concepts:

*Belonging, being and becoming*

- Principle 1: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Principle 2: High expectations and equity
- Practice: Responsiveness to children
- Practice: Learning through play
- Practice: Learning environments
- Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5.



## First viewing: What did you notice?

Ask participants to watch and listen to the vignette. After viewing it, ask some general questions to start the discussion:

- *What did you notice?*
- *What were the children doing?*
- *What did the educator do and say?*
- *What did you notice about the physical environment? Did anything stand out for you?*

Participants are likely to notice different things—different children, different examples of play and learning. These differences are interesting, as in their work educators notice and pay attention to different things. Highlight that there are always different ways of seeing the same practice or event. Each perspective enriches what we can learn. This is why sharing ideas, listening to others' perspectives and having discussions are so important.

Note: If you are using the vignette with a group that includes educators who work with older children, ask them to think about what they can learn from the video and the discussion about it. Many aspects of good quality are similar regardless of children's ages.

Discussion of this vignette offers valuable opportunities to heighten awareness of dimensions of good practice by educators who work with this age group and to increase appreciation of babies' and toddlers' learning by educators who have little or no experience with very young children.

## Second viewing: Looking more deeply at learning and teaching and links to the EYLF and the NQS

The brief vignette captures the busy atmosphere in a group of very young children. At first it may just appear that there is simply a lot of random roaming around. However, a closer look reveals a variety of examples of learning. Some of these include using large motor skills, communicating, following instructions, identifying the family of another child through a photo, recognising and naming other children in the group and initiating a social interaction. It is easy to miss a lot of very young children's play and learning unless you pay close attention.

The vignette also shows a rich learning environment where:

- colours are muted
- spaces are created within the overall space—in other words, the space is divided through the placement of furniture and equipment, encouraging children to disperse rather than 'clump and bunch'
- a variety of play and learning materials, many of which are not commercial toys, are available to the children
- an educator is on the floor, accessible to the children and interacting with more than one at a time. She is clearly paying attention to the children.

This vignette can be a basis for talking about babies' and young toddlers' play and learning, what it looks like, educators' roles, props and materials that encourage play, and most importantly, the kinds of learning opportunities children this age need.

One topic that could be discussed using this vignette is the role that the physical environment plays.

- *Ask participants if they notice any materials that seem particularly useful and attractive. Why do they think they appeal to very young children?*



A particular issue to discuss is decisions educators make about how much messiness and strewing of play and learning materials around the space to tolerate.

You could ask what evidence of learning is depicted in the vignette. You could focus on Jasmine, the girl in the pink jumper alone, or Ethan, the boy in the red and grey striped jumper. Both of these children, especially Jasmine, are at the stage of language development where they string sounds together as though they are speaking in sentences—sometimes paragraphs!—but only a few words are recognisable. It is clear that they are trying to communicate a specific message.

You could focus on the use of the photos, both the framed photos of families and the children's photos on the wall. The vignette is a good reminder that it's not so much about just having photos. The quality of the learning depends on how they are used and how educators promote learning. How can photos of children and of the children's families be used to promote a sense of identity and belonging.

- *It is clear that Jasmine understood the educator's suggestion that she take Andrew's family photo over to show Andrew. She is very purposeful in her actions. The educator also paid attention and commented on the fact that Andrew didn't engage with the photo or with Jasmine. What might Jasmine have learned about 'connecting' with others from this interaction? Why do you think the educator didn't do or say anything to encourage Andrew to respond to Jasmine?*

- *What does this vignette tell you about what Jasmine or Ethan have learned or are learning? Note that speculating about what children may be learning is likely to be different to what they are doing.*
- *What Learning Outcomes does this vignette illustrate? What are the reasons for your answers? Encourage participants to be specific in their answers, going beyond the headings of the Learning Outcomes to the detail. For example, what learning opportunities does a full-length mirror offer?*
- *What roles did the educator play throughout this vignette? How does her communication support the children's learning?*
- *What Principles and Practices does the vignette illustrate?*
- *What would you have changed or done differently if you were the educator in this vignette to create more or better learning opportunities?*
- *If you were observing this experience, what would be worth recording?*
- *How might the educator follow up on what she observed?*



## Third viewing: What have we learned? What next?

- *You may want to begin the discussion after the third viewing with a general question: 'What ideas can we take away from this vignette and the discussion we've had and how can we apply them in our program?'*
- *How accessible are we to the children we work with? What interferes with being accessible? How can we increase the times when we are fully available to the children and give them our attention?*
- *What can we do to improve the arrangement of the spaces for children to give them choices about being with other children or being on their own?*
- *Are our environments too messy and disorganised or, alternatively, are we too quick to tidy up and re-organise, thereby interfering with children's play? Or do we have a good balance?*
- *How can we improve on our responses to children who are learning to communicate with language? What are the most effective responses when we don't understand what they are trying to say?*
- *What might Ethan's and Jasmine's parents see in this vignette? How could the vignette be used to have discussions with families about children's learning?*
- *What else have we learned that we can apply to our practice?*
- *What actions might we take as a result of the discussion about the vignette?*



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