

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

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Quality Area 3



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Physical environment

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3 True or False?

Meaningful learning is more likely to occur in the indoor environment.

False. Meaningful learning experiences can occur in both indoor and outdoor spaces. The Early Years Learning Framework states that 'The outdoor space is of equal importance as the indoor space in providing engaging experiences for children' (EYLF, page 15). The Framework for School Age Care also highlights the potential of both learning environments, stating, 'Indoor and outdoor environments support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, school age care educators, families and the broader community' (FSAC, page 15).

3 Scenario

The day book is on display in the foyer of your service and highlights many of the play based learning experiences children have engaged in throughout the day. A parent approaches you after reading the day book on her way in to pick up her daughter. The parent and her daughter are new to the service, having only been attending for a week. The parent appears concerned and asks you, 'How are they learning anything if they are just playing all day?'

How would you respond to this parent?

3 Multiple Choice

Unencumbered floor space: does not include areas such as passageways, bathrooms, space set aside for storage, or administrative rooms.

How many square meters of unencumbered indoor space must centre based education and care services have for each child being educated and cared for at the service?

- a) 3.25
- b) 4
- c) 15
- d) 4.75

(Regulation 107 of the National Regulations)

3 True or False?

Unencumbered floor space: does not include areas such as passageways, bathrooms, space set aside for storage, or administrative rooms.

When calculating a service's unencumbered indoor space, a verandah can be included in the indoor space calculations.

True. The area of a verandah may be included in calculating the area of indoor space only with written approval of the regulatory authority. This may be considered if the verandah meets the purpose of indoor play space—for example, is protected from sun and rain and is attached to the indoor space. If included in the indoor space calculations, a verandah cannot also be included in the outdoor space calculations—that is, it cannot be counted twice (Regulation 107 of the National Regulations).

3 Discussion Point

The National Regulations require that the indoor spaces used by children at the education and care service premises are well ventilated and have adequate natural light (Regulation 110 of the National Regulations).

Do the indoor spaces in your service provide children with ample natural light?

Is natural light blocked or hindered in any way?

Could furniture or items be rearranged to allow more natural light in?

3 Discussion Point

Do children have opportunities to explore and access the natural environment?

How is the natural environment incorporated indoors?

How do you ensure that children under three years of age have meaningful opportunities to access the natural environment?

3 Discussion Point

How does your service highlight your responsibilities for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment?

3 Discussion Point

Does your service provide children with high quality resources?

Do the resources and materials provided to children demonstrate that you value their contributions and see them as capable participants in the environment?

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Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

3 Discussion Point

How do you model respect for the resources and materials made available to children at your service?

3 True or False?

Materials and resources should be used for one purpose only.

False. Educators can be creative in their use of equipment and materials to stimulate children's interest and curiosity. Choosing equipment and materials that can be used in multiple ways allows the environment to be regularly and readily rearranged or adjusted to provide additional interest, variety and challenge.

Children could also be supported to explore other appropriate ways of using equipment, resources and materials.

3 Multiple Choice

Which of the following activities is an example of an appropriate risk taking experience in an education and care service?

- a) Reading an eBook on a digital device
- b) A supervised child climbing a small tree**
- c) A child throwing rocks over other children's heads
- d) A child climbing over the fence of the premises

3 Scenario

Tamara, a four year old child in the preschool room, is afraid when other children ride bikes in the service's outdoor environment as she fears they will run into her.

What would you do in this situation to ensure the environment is inclusive and promotes this child's competence?

3 Multiple Choice

Which of the following is not an example of a sustainable practice?

- a) Collecting food scraps and placing them into a compost bin
- b) Throwing recyclable items in the garbage**
- c) Growing fruits and vegetables
- d) Putting recyclable items in the recycling bin

3 Discussion Point

One of the most significant influences on children's behaviour and attitudes is how the important adults in their lives act.

How do you role model sustainable practices in your daily interactions with children?

For further information, see *Newsletter No# 67* at www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

3 True or False?

Art supplies that are not in use need to be stored at a height inaccessible for children to use independently.

False. Allowing children to independently access non-toxic resources that do not present a direct risk to safety promotes creativity and a sense of agency.

3 Scenario

A number of families at your service have voiced their concern that they feel rushed at drop off and pick up times. They said that they feel that they are 'getting in the way' and do not have anywhere to sit and spend time with their children or stand and talk to educators.

How could you adapt the physical environment to address the concerns of these families?

What other adaptations could you make to ensure parents feel welcome?

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Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

Quality Area 3



Physical environment

3 Discussion Point

Would you rather *quality* or *quantity* in the resources you have available for children?

Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of each.

3 Multiple Choice

Beth is four years old, and requires the use of a mobility aid to walk. The doorframe between the indoor and outdoor environment at your service is raised, making it hard for Beth to move between the two. What action should you take to ensure the environment is inclusive of Beth's needs?

- a) Tell Beth that she must stay inside when she is at the service
- b) Get a smooth ramp to go over the door frame and consider other adjustments that can make the outdoor environment more inclusive**
- c) Restrict all children from going outside when Beth is present
- d) Tell Beth's parents that the service cannot accept her, as it would be too difficult to accommodate her needs.

3 Scenario

You are currently employed as an educator at an inner-city preschool. Recently, you attended a conference discussing the benefits of incorporating forest preschool, or 'bush kinder' into the educational program; encouraging children to spend more time outdoors and in nature. Your service is on the top floor of a six-storey building, and although you have a large, open outdoor area, it is made entirely of synthetic and other man-made materials.

How would you incorporate the concept and associated benefits of a nature program into your service?

3 Scenario

A parent in your service has come to you very distressed that Duncan, their four year old son, cannot open the door that leads to the toilets. Duncan has hypotonia of his core muscles (lacks core muscle strength). He explains that he has had multiple toileting accidents when he could not open the door and get to the toilet in time.

What adaptations could be made to the physical environment to support Duncan's needs?

3 Activity



How is the design of your facilities/premises appropriate for the operation of your service?

List any adaptations or changes you would like to make and why.

Circle the changes that you believe could be achieved within the next 12 months, and share your ideas with the group. Is this something that could be further explored in the service's Quality Improvement Plan?

3 Discussion Point

The Reggio Emilia philosophy considers the environment to be the child's 'third teacher'.

What does this concept mean to you?

3 Discussion Point

The National Regulations require that the indoor environment needs to be maintained at a temperature that ensures the safety and wellbeing of the children at an education and care service (Regulation 110 of the National Regulations).

How does (or could) your service adapt its practices and procedures in extreme weather conditions?

3 Activity

Look around the service's indoor and outdoor environment, what cultures can you see reflected in the resources and materials available to children and families?