



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

QUALITY AREA 7

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEAM BUILDING



The educational leader is responsible for leading the development of the curriculum at the service.

To do this effectively the educational leader should encourage educators to collaborate and ensure the establishment of clear goals for teaching and learning. They will create a culture where educators reflect, affirm and challenge each other to deliver high quality educational programs.

Things to consider:

- When and how do you support a shared leadership model?
- How do you create and nurture a professional learning community?
- How can a collaborative approach ensure documentation is meaningful, relevant and informs your work with children and families?
- How does your shared leadership model connect with the service vision, mission and philosophy?

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The importance of establishing effective leadership is reflected in Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), in particular:

Standard 7.1: Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.

Element 7.1.4: Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or coordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.

Some considerations in Quality Area 4:

Element 4.2.2: Educators, coordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships.

A SHARED LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Shared or distributed leadership involves creating a collaborative leadership culture where leadership is not just positional but about drawing on each team members' strengths and expertise. In education and care services, a shared leadership model can result in a team of educators who are committed to a culture of learning, respect and teamwork (Waniganayake, Rodd & Gibbs, 2015).

By adopting a shared leadership approach, you can:

- inspire, affirm, challenge and extend the practice of educators in your service
- promote effective teamwork where educators are committed to a culture of learning, respect and collaboration
- enrich the team by bringing together different perspectives and ideas.

Some questions to reflect on as a team :

- What are the potential benefits of a shared leadership model for your service ?
- What strategies can be implemented to create shared leadership?

RESPECTING OTHER PEOPLE'S VIEWPOINTS AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT EVERYONE HAS A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE IS ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOPING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICE.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL TEAM

Team stability supports the development of strong attachments and relationships between children, educators and families.

There are a number of ways you can help create a stable team:

Developing common goals

Developing a shared vision for the service is an important part of building teams in education and care services.

When individual and organisational goals align, educators are more likely to experience a sense of ownership for the direction of the service.

Creating a sense of ownership is achieved through:

- information sharing
- joint planning and goal setting
- critically reflecting on professional standards in order to improve practice
- affirming and challenging each other.

Communicating effectively

To communicate well within a team individuals need to:

- engage in active listening
- try to understand each other's feelings and points of view
- respect and appreciate the values, knowledge and skills of others
- solve problems collaboratively
- be open to learning from each other.

Positive attitude to change

Successful teams have a positive attitude towards change and are open to new ways of working. It can be useful for educators to engage in team building exercises that are focused on implementing change and quality improvements.

Affirming and challenging

The team is richer when different perspectives and ideas are shared. It is essential to create an environment where educators are able to express their views and each team member feels confident to raise ideas. It is important to create a culture that values and honours diversity and where team members respond in culturally competent ways.

Tips for creating a positive culture include:

- identifying common goals
- searching for areas of agreement
- considering the range of solutions and possibilities
- questioning beliefs
- a commitment to resolving problems as a group.

Supporting professional development

Effective leaders seek ways to empower others. They have a thorough understanding of the approved frameworks and standards and seek ways to facilitate children's learning.

Educational leaders can support educators' growth and foster a professional learning community by:

- establishing clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning
- clarifying roles
- building supportive relationships
- encouraging active participation
- monitoring team effectiveness.

What does leadership look like in education and care settings?

Early Childhood Australia developed a framework based on extensive research and national consultations that has led to the following understandings about leadership:

Leadership is about identity—it starts from within.

Leadership is about influence (both directly and indirectly) and responsibility, and is therefore potentially open to everyone.

Leadership demonstrates respect as an enactment of ethical commitments.

Leadership is about qualities and values rather than position.

There is not just one way to enact leadership—it is complex, dynamic and varies from situation to situation and from culture to culture.

Leadership is about purpose.

Leadership capabilities can be professionally developed.

Jenny Hill and Jenny Lewis (2012)

LEADING AND GUIDING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Teamwork and high quality education and care go hand in hand so it is important that educational leaders take a shared leadership approach.

The [Guide to the National Law and Regulations](#) offers some strategies for creating a shared leadership approach which include:

- leading and being part of reflective discussions about practice and implementing the learning framework
- mentoring other educators by leading quality practice
- discussing routines and ways to make them more effective learning experiences
- observing children and educator interactions, and making suggestions on how to improve interactions and intentional teaching
- talking to parents about the educational program
- working with other early childhood professionals such as maternal and child health nurses and early childhood intervention specialists
- assisting with documenting children's learning and how these assessments can inform curriculum decision making.

BENEFITS OF SHARED LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

Encouraging collaboration, communication and effective teamwork has proven benefits for stability in education and care services.

Some benefits for educators include:

- improved self-esteem and morale
- increased job satisfaction
- reduction of stress and burnout
- a sense of ownership for the direction of the service
- development of stronger relationships and communication with children and families
- the contribution to children's safety, security, happiness and learning.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at www.acecqa.gov.au to download:

[Guide to the National Quality Standard](#)

[Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#)

[My Time Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#)

Find other useful resources:

[Gowrie South Australia research summary – Team Building](#)

Ebbeck, M. & Waniganayake, M. (2003) *Early Childhood Professionals: Leading Today and Tomorrow*. Elsevier: Australia

Waniganayake, M., Rodd, J. & Gibbs, L. (2015). *Thinking and learning about leadership: Early childhood research from Australia, Finland and Norway*. Community child care Co-operative: Marrickville.

[What Does Leadership Look Like In Early Childhood Settings?](#) *Every Child – Vol.18 No.4 2012- Quality in Early Childhood Settings*

More information is available on the ACECQA website acecqa.gov.au

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