



Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning:

Play-based learning and intentionality

November 2023

This Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning practice resource is part of a series of 8 practice resources for Play-based learning and intentionality in early childhood education and care services (ECEC). Each resource is aligned with the Principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0).

Before using this resource, read the Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality. The introduction provides insights into the importance of intentionality in play-based learning in quality, evidence-based ECEC practice with cultural responsiveness at its heart.

Intentionality within play-based learning depends on thoughtful decision-making in every aspect of the curriculum. It therefore requires teachers and educators to constantly reflect on what they are doing and learn new strategies and skills, drawing on diverse perspectives, evidence bases and theories to build a deeper understanding of how to support the learning, development and wellbeing of each child. Critical reflection supports this process. It involves in-depth thinking about your practice and its impact, and becoming more aware of your strengths and preferences, as well as areas where you can further build your knowledge, skills or confidence. Critical Reflection (Element 1.3.2) is embedded in the National Quality Standard (NQS).

Strategies for intentionality within play-based learning that can support this Principle include:

- Draw on a diverse range of perspectives from children, families, colleagues and wider professional networks to examine the effectiveness of intentionality in play-based learning. Think about what is working well and for whom, with a focus on equity and social justice.

- Extend your range of strategies to support intentionality in play-based learning by reading evidence-based resources and practising what you learn. Resources such as the [early childhood learning trajectories](#) or [Tried and Tested guides](#) provide evidence-based guidance to inform curriculum and pedagogy.
- Use critical reflection, either individually or with colleagues, to evaluate and refine play-based strategies, and ensure they work for your context and promote inclusive learning for every child. Consider different ways to reflect with others, such as through online networks or through yarning and oral communication.
- Draw on a range of professional sources to support the critical reflection process and to ensure that it reflects the social and cultural differences within the service. Consider how theory, service philosophies and underpinning ethics (such as the [ECA Code of Ethics](#)) are pivotal in promoting and sustaining equity, inclusion and socially just practice. Reflect deeply on your own beliefs, assumptions and experiences about what effective intentionality looks like within play-based learning and routines. Consider how your assumptions and practices relate to children's diverse lived experiences to promote a culture of inclusion.
- Explore the science of learning across the early years and beyond, to understand how children develop in key domains. Critically reflect on how this knowledge can inform your practice to enhance play-based learning and support continuity of learning across contexts.
- Embed reflexive practice as an ongoing professional learning strategy to support culturally responsive practices across the service. This involves critically examining personal beliefs and biases as well as carefully considering what you and others bring to each experience and interaction.

Reflection questions

- How do you ensure that a *robust culture of critical reflection is established when [teachers and] educators as a team, as well as children and families, are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review?* (EYLF V2.0, p. 18)
- How do you build your knowledge about evidence-based approaches to acting intentionally within play-based learning? What else could you do?

This practice resource is part of a series of 8 Play-based learning and intentionality resources including:

- [Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships](#)
- [Partnerships](#)
- [Respect for diversity](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives](#)
- [Equity, inclusion and high expectations](#)
- [Sustainability](#)
- [Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning](#)
- [Collaborative leadership and teamwork.](#)

Before using the other resources in this series, read the [Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality](#).

They link to the [early childhood learning trajectories](#) suite of resources including the [Learning trajectories user guide](#), [Evidence report](#) and the [Assessment for children's learning practice resources](#).