

Policy Area 1: Educational program and practice

“Curriculum decision making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection to with community, wellbeing, confidence as learner, and effective communicators.” Revised National Quality Standards 1.1.1

1.1 Philosophy

Reviewed: 2/3/18

7.1.1 A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service’s operations.

5.1 Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.

5.1.2 The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.

4.2.1 Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

Building genuinely, warm and ongoing relationships with children and their families, whilst providing quality education and care; based on The Early Years Learning framework.

Blue Mountains Occasional Care Service has offered a licensed mobile Early Childhood Service to the Blue Mountains community since 1995. As part of Mountains Outreach Community Service (MOCS) it is well placed to provide families with a quality Early Childhood program, support in their parenting, links to other community services, and resources that can strengthen family and community life. We offer a play based educational program developed by qualified Early Childhood staff - including an Early Childhood teacher, within the locations of Blaxland, Lawson, and Blackheath. At each of our locations we are active in making our philosophy and program meaningful and valuable to our sense of belonging, being and becoming for all.

We believe in developing strong ongoing relationships with children, families and the community, and we encourage collaboration and participation in a way that is relevant and comfortable. This partnership approach supports a holistic view of the child, as a capable learner, learning best through play and social engagement. We aim to give children a sense of themselves as people with rights, and with a sense of responsibility for the rights of others.

We base our philosophy of building genuine, caring and supportive relationships, on the research known as the Circle of Security, and staff actively work towards being the ‘secure base and safe haven’ for children which helps them feel able to go out and explore. Staff actively make themselves ‘emotionally available’ to children at a time of transition from home to educational setting, and we understand that positive transitions from home to school are proven to enhance successful schooling outcomes.

We base our curriculum on the Australian Early Years Learning Framework for everything we do as educators. It guides our work and inspires us to provide an enriching educational experience to every child, inclusively.

Staff embrace an ethos of reflective practice and continually strive to improve and enhance the quality of the service and its program. This is done by regular staff meetings, ongoing discussions, research and professional development.

We aim to listen to children in multiple ways and provide opportunities to make their learning visible to them and others. We aim to provide a rich learning environment that inspires and supports children to think, to wonder, to investigate and to research their understandings of the world around them. An environment that offers real interest and challenge but also provides secure feelings.

We treasure the Blue Mountains and the natural environment in which we live, and aim to foster a sense of pride in our community and a sense of importance for a sustainable future.

We respectfully acknowledge the Darug and Gundungurra people as the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on. We feel it is important to weave the Aboriginal Culture into our daily practice and we seek to develop relationships with key people that can help us to achieve this. We also acknowledge that we are a multicultural society, and value diversity of cultures, religions, and beliefs.

1.2 Statement of principles

BMOCCS supports the five principles from the EYLF and uses these to guide our practice with the aim to enhance children's development and work towards achieving the learning outcomes.

The five principles are:

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. Partnerships
3. High expectations and equity
4. Respect for diversity
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

Our values and beliefs (based on the principles above) are:

- ✿ BMOCCS values the diversity of the community including the multicultural diversity in the Blue Mountains.
- ✿ We support collaborative relationships between educators and families that aim to improve the lives of all children.
- ✿ We view every child as a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- ✿ We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a primary caregiver.
- ✿ We identify that environments play a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- ✿ We acknowledge that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates.
- ✿ We recognise that all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.
- ✿ We engage in reflective practice as we respect the effect that our practice has on others, and we are willing to learn from personal experience and from the experiences of others.
- ✿ As a part of a community based child and family service, we provide opportunity for collaboration and cooperation with colleagues and family/community for the enhancement of children's learning and development and for the overall continual review of our practices and ideas.

The EYLF requires educators to identify with eight key practices, which are to:

1. Adopt holistic practices
2. Be responsive to children
3. Plan and implement learning through play
4. Create many opportunities for intentional teaching
5. Create physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning
6. Value the cultural and social contexts of children and their families
7. Provide for continuity in experiences, enable children to have successful transitions
8. Assess and monitor children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes

BMOCCS aims to adopt the eight key practices of the EYLF as we believe children's earliest development and learning takes place through relationships and thus relationships should actively promote a sense of being, belonging and becoming - connected to family, community, culture and place. We recognise that when we connect our principles, values and beliefs with best practice objectives we can then actively promote the key learning outcomes so that...

'All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life' (EYLF, 2009).

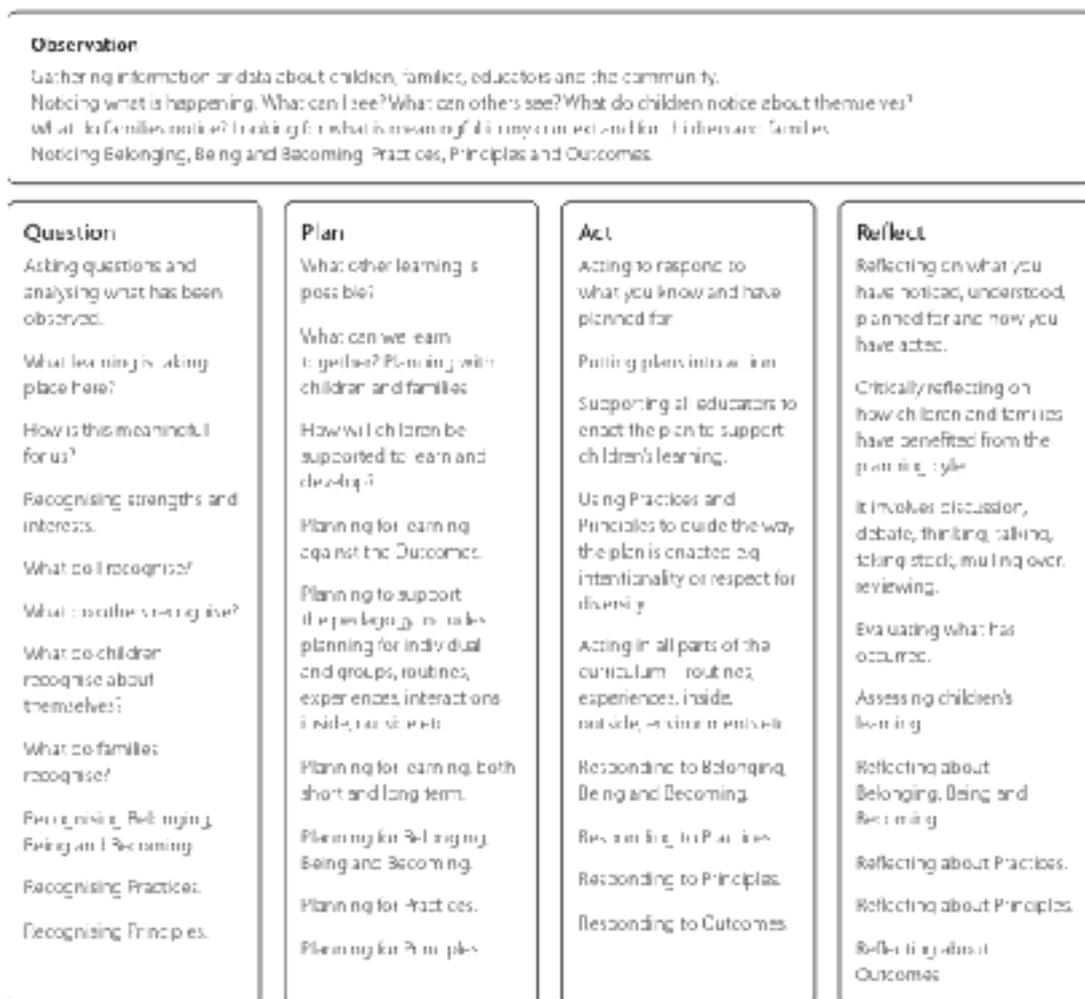
1.3 Assessment and Planning

‘Educators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child’

BMOCCS educators use the EYLF planning cycle as an effective tool for guiding our planning process. Our philosophy and statement of principles are embedded in all that we do. We use the EYLF outcomes to further describe and evaluate the learning that occurs and inform new directions to take.

Quality Standard 1.3.1 Families are informed about the program and their child's progress. We outline our documentation process to families, visitors and new staff members by providing visual examples in our term booklets and daily slide photographic slideshow. Our tri weekly program is posted to our Facebook page for parents to view.

EYLF planning cycle



* Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEW) (2012). Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Education Guide for Early Childhood Learning Framework for Australia. Canberra, ACT: DEW.

1.3 Attachment – Learning stories explanation

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www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/staff/SueHill/Learningstories.pdf

To find out about children's learning we will use a new research tool called 'learning stories'. Learning stories are based on the learning narratives of Dr Margaret Carr from Waikato University in New Zealand (Carr & Podmore 2000, Carr 2000, Podmore & Carr 1999). Narrative or storied approaches in education have a rich history (see Genishi 1992, Witherell & Noddings 1991, Clandinin & Connelly 1990).

Witherell & Noddings 1991 say this:

Finally stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems... They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and to what effect. (p 280)

Learning stories capture the context of the learning environment that appears to be enabling or constraining learning. Learning stories are not the same as case studies or running records about children—they are narratives or stories and they need to be a good tale.

What is a good learning story? Not every minute of detail is recorded just the main really important events. Good stories give details about the context and background and this is to engage the reader. Good stories not only describe actions they also make feelings and interpretations visible (Hatterly & Sands 2002).

The following example from Hatterly & Sands (2002) takes place in a childcare centre and shows the genre of a learning story so we can deconstruct the features.

The little rug is no longer necessary as Wiremu is off exploring the world. His roly-poly antics are leading him in new direction! He pulls himself into headstand positions (gymnastic potential here) then flops down and looks up with those dramatic dark eyes as if to say 'Well what do you think of that?' And while on the move he's checking the environment out with lots of 'observational pauses'. Big world here I come!

Review – We're seeing progress here. Each day there is a little more confidence and strength in Wiremu's movements and such determination and persistence.

What next - We could position interesting objects at a little distance, however Wiremu has his own personal agenda. He's self-motivated to be 'on the move'. Give him lots of space and opportunity to use those developing muscles. He loves the verbal stimulation, so lots of talking with him- this is so very pleasurable anyway, as he gives such wonderful feedback!

When we compare the genre of a learning story with case studies or other forms of writing we find they are less clinical, less concerned with keeping interpretation out of the recording. They are more interesting and engaging than an anecdote and more lively and dynamic than objective field notes. The learning story can be used with other teachers, parents and children as a site for interesting conversations. Parents too can be involved in writing learning stories and interviews and dialogue from children can be included.

Learning stories can be quite short pieces or several episodes linked together. After writing the learning scenario the researcher comments on the child's (children's) learning and suggests plans for future work.

The stories will tell what children 'can do' rather than what they can't do. By describing strengths and interests teacher-researchers can look for positive ways forward.

'What is the theoretical base for learning stories?' Learning stories have a theoretical base in socio-cultural theory. Socio-culturally oriented writers have described learning as appropriated (taken up) in authentic cultural locations, defining these as communities of practice (Carr 2001, Lave 1991). The learning story research method considers the context, location and people involved as all play a part in

learning.

'Is the methodology of learning story valid?', people may ask. Yes it is valid. The narrative approach to research is often used in feminist and indigenous research and concerns the ways people interpret and make sense of their experiences. Many feminist scholars argue that there is no such thing as a pure, value free, objective approach to observing people's behaviour. In fact 'the silencing of the personal voice' in academic writing may be criticised because it allows researchers to pretend that they are distant and removed from the people observed. In teaching and learning this distancing is not the case and learning is not context free.

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