

EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK



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From the moment the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) was introduced, educators have wanted to know how to meet its requirements for programming and documentation.

The EYLF's requirements have much in common with current licensing and accreditation requirements, so educators can be confident that they will not have to change everything about their existing programming and documentation. In addition, the EYLF does not expect educators to use set formats or have a one-size-fits-all approach. Quite the opposite, it encourages educators to develop their own ways of programming and documentation.

Most educators, however, will need to make some changes. The nature and extent of these changes will vary between educators because of their different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, skills and experience and, of course, the philosophy of the service they are in (e.g. Reggio Emilia, Montessori).

An effective and efficient way for educators to identify changes the EYLF might require them to make to programming and documentation is to ask themselves a series of pertinent questions. The answers to these questions will then dictate the changes to be made. The National Quality Standard (NQS) lists such questions on pages 9 and 16, with others scattered throughout that document. The NQS also details the documents assessors will want to see in place. The Childcare Queensland website www.childcareqld.org.au has available another list of questions which was developed for the *EYLF: Putting it into practice workshops* presented by Pam Maclean and myself throughout Queensland in 2010.

Using this method, educators will be able to readily identify those aspects of their programming and documentation that already meet the EYLF, those that need some adjustments to comply, those that are inconsistent with the EYLF, and those that need to be added.

So what might these changes be? The common answers seem to be:

Difference 1: Documenting family input

The EYLF strongly emphasises *Partnerships* with families and *Respect for Diversity*. In addition, the EYLF requires us to think of 'culture' in much broader terms than ethnicity, and to consider such matters as how children and their families function together. The way children live affects the way they learn.

The two principles cannot be met without family input, and this is acknowledged in the NQS which requires us to obtain and document family input, preferably from the parents and, wherever possible, in their own words. The NQS also requires documentation which parents can readily understand, is meaningful to them, evidences their contributions, invites their feedback, and makes it easy for them to contribute further.

Services use a wide variety of strategies and formats to obtain and document family input. These include Communication Books, Family Frolic, Learning Stories and, of course, Parent Feedback on displayed programs, and similar documents (*EYLF: Programming and documentation made easy, Abbey and Maclean, 2011*)

Difference 2: Documenting children's input

Under the EYLF, educators also need to document children's contributions to the program. They need to go far beyond identifying and extending on children's interests, and then documenting this. It is about educators involving children in every aspect of the programming from planning to evaluation, and involving them in the documentation. Means of achieving this include reflective walls, children's observations, media reviews and daily journals (*EYLF: Programming and documentation made easy, Abbey and Maclean, 2011*).

Difference 3: Individual child records and portfolios

Under the EYLF, individual child records and portfolios will contain many more documents recording parental and children's input so that they truly reflect the collaboration of parent, child and educator and other children in a child's learning.

Difference 4: Transition statements

The need to prepare Transition Statements for children moving to formal schooling is new to most services. These statements provide the school's teachers with information about each child's particular needs, especially emotional and social. The information is then used to ensure a smooth transition.

Transition Statements include the perspectives of all three partners – educator, parent and child – so that the school's teacher is better placed to understand each child. For example, the:

- family might provide information about their child's needs, interests and attitude to starting school, and about how the child usually adapts to new situations and new experiences;
- child might share likes, interests and feelings (perhaps fears) about attending school; and,
- educator would provide information about the child's learning outcomes celebrated and attitudes to learning.

Difference 5: Communicating the program

The EYLF emphasises that all elements of documentation are integral to communicating the program. Collectively, they communicate the many and varied ways children's learning occurs throughout the day, and the viewpoints of all parties.

The program displayed at the end of the day, however, has always been an important part of communicating the program. Educators will still be able to choose their own format.

The EYLF does demand a set format, rather it encourages educators to take an individual approach. More than likely, your format will be similar to that you use now. However, the content may change because some of the requirements have changed under the EYLF. For example, many educators will need to add co-constructed activities and intentional teaching to their format.

Another difference is that much of the program will be documented throughout the day and at the end of the day through input from educators, parents and children.

Summary:

Now that you have touched upon the different programming and documentation requirements of the EYLF and the NQS, you probably feel reassured that you already do much of what it is required.

Your task is to decide what to retain in your current programming and documentation and what to change. You will not be too far wrong

if, above all, every aspect of your programming and documentation demonstrates that all partners' contributions are wanted, valued and respected, are included, and actively encouraged.

The content of this article has been drawn from the DVD: Programming and documentation made easy co-developed by Dr Brenda Abbey and Pam Maclean, both of whom are Childcare Queensland members..

Dr Brenda Abbey is a childcare consultant and trainer with particular interest and expertise in the EYLF and NQS. She is the author of Managing compliance in childcare services: The essential guide for Queensland practitioners. Brenda has co-developed the DVDs EYLF: Putting it into practice and EYLF: Programming and documentation made easy and an EYLF Terminology Poster Pack. These resources are available online at www.childcarebydesign.com.au or by emailing info@childcarebydesign.com.au

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