

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 1

To view the full version of this policy (including attachments); please speak to the staff at your early learning service.

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy statement:

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- supporting each child to achieve learning outcomes consistent with the national *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*;
- providing a high quality curriculum that is based on reflective practice, critical analysis and planning;
- providing an educational program where children can learn through play and are supported to make decisions, problem-solve and build positive relationships with others;
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices;
- involving families in the development and review of educational program and practice.

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that the educational program (curriculum) and practice at Uniting Early Learning is:

- based on an approved learning framework;
- underpinned by critical reflection and careful planning;
- stimulating, engaging and committed to enhancing children's learning and development.

Summary of Procedures related to this Policy:

The educational program at Uniting Early Learning should be stimulating and engaging, enhancing children's learning and development, and based on approved learning frameworks. The developmental needs, interests and experiences, and the individual differences of each child should be accommodated in the educational program. It is important that the Approved Provider develops and regularly evaluates the educational program in collaboration with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, children and families. A copy of the educational program should be displayed at the service and be accessible to parents (Regulation 75).

Service leaders and staff are responsible for ensuring that each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documentation and evaluation, with a record of learning and development for each child being updated and maintained on an ongoing basis. There is no prescribed method in the National Law or National Regulations for documenting assessment of children's learning. Each service must determine a method that suits their individual circumstances. To meet the documentation requirements of the National Regulations, the assessment must include an analysis of children's learning. Collecting this information enables educators to plan effectively for each child's learning and development. It can also be used by educators to stimulate reflection on their own values, beliefs and teaching practices, and to communicate about children's learning with children and their families.

Regular communication should be established between the service and parents in relation to each child's learning and development, and parents must be provided with information about the content and implementation of the educational program, their child's participation in the program and documentation relating to assessments or evaluations of their child.

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of the service.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and legislation:

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) requires services to deliver an educational program (curriculum) that is based on an approved learning framework. In Victoria, approved learning frameworks for the early childhood sector are the *Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming)* (refer to Attachment 2) and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to Attachment 2). These documents are underpinned by practices and principles that encourage reflection and provide educators with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood curriculum in a contemporary context. The educational program must also be underpinned by the service's philosophy.

Part 4.1 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations) outlines the operational requirements for educational program and practice within services, including the requirements for documentation of assessments in relation to the educational program.

The National Regulations requires the appointment of an Educational Leader to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) at the service (Regulation 118). This person will have suitable qualifications and experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, enabling them to guide other educators in planning and reflection, and to mentor colleagues in implementation practices (*Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations*, p.85 – refer to Attachment 2).

The *National Quality Standard* is linked to the approved learning frameworks. Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice focuses on “enhancing children's learning and development through the:

- pedagogical practices of educators and co-ordinators

- development of programs that promote children’s learning across five learning outcomes”
(*Guide to the National Quality Standard*, p.20 – refer to Attachment 2).

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of this policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness;
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual. The majority of the definitions below are from: *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (refer to Sources)

Approved learning framework: A document that outlines practices that educators and co-ordinators must use to support and promote children’s learning. The *Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming)* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* are approved learning frameworks for use in Victoria (refer to Sources).

Critical reflection: Reflective, or thoughtful, practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p45 – refer to Sources).

Curriculum: All interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p45 – refer to Sources; adapted from Te Whariki).

Each child: A phrase used in the *National Quality Standard* when an individualised approach is warranted and educators are required to modify their response to meet the needs of an individual child. An example is ‘each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture and interests provide the foundation for the program’.

Educational Leader: The Approved Provider of an education and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual to lead the development and implementation of educational programs at the service (Regulation 118). This person must have a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (or other approved learning framework), be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in the implementation of their practice.

Learning: A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth, as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.

Learning framework: Refer to **approved learning framework** above.

Learning outcome: A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families.

Learning relationships: Relationships that further children's learning and development. Both adult and child have intent to learn from one another.

Pedagogy: early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

Play-based learning: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social world as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by the Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

Review date: July 2017

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*