



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority®

**Educational Leadership in
Outside School Hours Care**

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ACTION



**The Educational Leader Resource
Addendum for Outside School Hours Care**

“If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants.”

Isaac Newton

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INTRODUCTION

This Addendum to *The Educational Leader Resource* brings together a collection of information, reflections, practical ideas and experiences of educational leaders in outside school hours care.

While there are many similarities with colleagues who work in other children's education and care services, practice wisdom suggests the role of the educational leader in outside school hours care has unique aspects that provide challenges and opportunities worthy of recognition and celebration.

The information in this addendum highlights critical strategies that can help build the effectiveness of educational leaders' practice. The information comes from Australian and international research, and practitioners working in a diverse range of services and highlight practices that confirm the essential role of educational leaders in outside school hours care. Positioned alongside the Resource, these ideas, reflections and strategies speak directly to those who are in the educational leader role in outside school hours care services, those who are considering taking on the role, and those who support them.

This Addendum provides insights and perspective about educational leadership within outside school hours care and provides guidance as well as practical support to realise the intent of the role under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

As highlighted in *The Educational Leader Resource*, there is no one size fits all approach to educational leadership. For outside school hours care services, this is particularly true – context is a critical factor that shapes how the role is enacted and how it can be maximised to ensure learning and development outcomes for each child.

Using this Addendum

The Addendum is designed to build on *The Educational Leader Resource*. Educational leaders, and those who support them, are encouraged to read these documents together and use the collection of reflective questions to consider how the strategies and ideas could be used in their context. It is important that educational leaders in outside school hours care see themselves as part of the rich and diverse fabric of quality children's education and care leadership, and continue to add their perspective to the broader conversation. The Addendum takes theoretical understandings and technical guidance and considers it in relation to practical strategies and experiences. It aims to inspire and motivate educational leaders to maximise their potential in supporting the delivery of quality outcomes for children and families in outside school hours care across Australia.

1. THEORIES AND INFLUENCES FOR OSHC

The practical ways outside school hours care (OSHC) educational leaders draw on, acknowledge, explain, document and reflect on various educational theories and influences, will be evident across the practices, relationships and environments of the service and service team, children and families.

What is the purpose of recognising theories and influences within OSHC?

To provide direction:

“The conscious application of theoretical knowledge enables educational leaders to guide and collaborate with educators in developing the early childhood program.” (ACECQA, 2019, p.86)

To be foundational and representational:

“Rather than educators drawing on a grab-bag of strategies in their work, explicitly using theory as a reference point can help build cohesion within teams and across the service. In some types of programs, a central theoretical approach is the clear and obvious driver of practice (for example, Montessori and Steiner schools). Typically, programs in Australia may be informed by a range of theories.” (ACECQA, 2019, p.86)

To develop and strengthen practices:

“Theories are a tool to help us develop our understanding. By being conscious of the theories they are drawing on to inform their work, educational leaders and educators can recognise their strengths and limitations, and seek alternative ways of understanding when needed” (ACECQA, 2019, p.86).

Recognising and unpacking theories and approaches within OSHC

Educators can draw upon multiple theoretical influences to inform their pedagogy around children’s learning via play and leisure. The table below (table 1) provides an overview of a range of theoretical perspectives and key concepts that may inform approaches to children’s learning and development, highlighting how key concepts or theories may be evident in your practice.

Table 1. Pedagogical theories and perspectives

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Developmental	Children learn in discrete or continuous stages over time; often compartmentalised into specific domains and milestones of becoming and/or learning.	<i>Piaget</i>	Cognitive Development (four stages)
		<i>Erikson</i>	Psychosocial development (eight stages)
		<i>Bowlby</i>	Attachment Theory
		<i>Steiner</i>	Developmental (three stages)
		<i>Bruner</i>	Constructivist (three stages)
		<i>Montessori</i>	Planes of Development (four planes)
		<i>Gardner</i>	Multiple Intelligences (eight different types)
In practice			
Educators plan environments, resources and interactions to reflect and respond to children’s developmental stages.			
Educators will observe children using different thinking strategies throughout the different stages of development. Stages are identifiable through observing children’s questions, responses and approaches to tasks and experiences. As children acquire new knowledge and master new skills, they move into another stage of development.			

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Socio-cultural	Children’s learning occurs in the context of family, culture and community; emphasising the importance of respectful relationships across stakeholders.	<i>Vygotsky</i>	Socio-cultural theory including Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding
		<i>Bronfenbrenner</i>	Ecological Systems theory with four interrelated systems that influence learning
		<i>Malaguzzi</i>	Reggio Emilia approach includes the image of the child and the 100 languages of children
Socio-behaviourist	Children’s learning is shaped by experience and guidance.	<i>Bandura</i>	Social Learning Theory focused on imitation and modelling of others
		<i>Louise Porter</i>	Positive Behavioural Guidance focused on beliefs, values and practices to meet children’s needs

In practice

Educators recognise their service’s unique community context. They provide tailored environments, resources, experiences and communications which reflect and respond to the cultures and circumstances of their children, families, fellow educators and local community members.

Educators apply scaffolding when they intentionally extend children’s thinking, building on what they already know. This can be done using open ended questions, modelling steps involved or carefully resourcing the environment with tailored materials.

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Post-structural	Children’s learning is influenced by power, equity and social justice. There are many forms of knowledge and truth is relative to many realities. The need to think about what we take for granted in our work.	<i>Foucault</i>	Discourse and Power/ Knowledge
		<i>Judith Butler</i>	Gender Performativity

In practice

Educators apply gender theory by questioning the use of the gender binary in discourse – male/female; acknowledging that is not a fact but a socially constructed idea that limits some stakeholders’ sense of identity and renders them invisible or illegitimate.

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Critical	Children’s learning programs have hidden aspects, framing certain points of views and hiding others; resulting in educators decisions impacting on children differently.	<i>Freire</i>	Dialogue, Praxis and Conscientization
		<i>Moll, Amanti and Gonzalez</i>	Funds of Knowledge
		<i>Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards</i>	Anti-bias

In practice

Educators apply and teach children critical thinking and problem solving, particularly when questioning how “fair” processes and accessibility for individuals and groups.

Educators will demonstrate respect for others, themselves and all community members to support children develop a positive sense of self and group identity.

Educators may challenge others who provide the same approach or make blanket statements including, ‘we have always done it this way’.

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Playwork	Recognises that children learn through play which should be freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children's culture is separate from adults.	<i>Sutton-Smith</i>	Rhetoric's of Play (seven myths/ways to viewing play)
		<i>Hughes</i>	Taxonomy of Play Types (16 different play types)

In practice

Educators apply Playwork theory when observing play to help understand why children are playing. Educators make loose parts accessible so children can access them independent of adult help and to ensure the parts are not set up to promote or direct a certain type of play. Educators observe children's loose parts play and enter play when invited by the child/ren.

Perspectives	Focus	Theorist or Thinker	Theory or Key Concept
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Recognises the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as living communities interconnected by country, culture and people. This is a source of strength and resilience against the impacts of colonisation.	<i>Tyson Yunkaporta</i>	8 Ways of Learning
		<i>Bob Randall</i>	Oursness
		<i>Larry Purnell</i>	Model for Cultural Competence

In practice

Educators apply Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives when communication is a two way dialogue with more yarning and listening and less talking at people. Through stories and everyday conversation, educators make community links that allow the shared vision to come to life.



Practice story – Forrest Out of School Hours Care (FOOSHC)

Forrest Out of School Hours Care (FOOSHC), ACT focuses on the Playwork theory, evident through:

- A large dedicated outdoor space for large loose parts play.
- A partnership with a local community organisation, ‘The Green Shed’ which includes bimonthly visits to swap and source recycled and donated loose parts.
- The educational leader has taken part in local and global professional development sessions related to loose parts and the Playwork theory.



Practice Story – John Paul College Outside School Hours Care (JPCOSHC)

John Paul College Outside School Hours Care (JPCOSHC), Qld focuses on environmental features which reflect the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, evident through:

- A yarning circle used for small and large group discussion and professional development.
- The use of local Aboriginal language in both indoor and outdoor environments.



What happens to our work when we recognise the influence of different theories?

Educational leaders significantly contribute to the ongoing development of educators and children's learning. Through recognising and reflecting on the influence of different theories on our work, we can promote, challenge and inspire new ways to think, approach, observe and engage with others. This includes awareness of how our own personal experiences, values, beliefs and circumstances can influence interactions and personal perceptions whilst working with children. As *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care* (p.9) acknowledges, understanding and applying a range of theoretical perspectives and approaches can support educational leaders and educators to:

- Challenge what are considered traditional norms, ways of doing things and in how we view children.
- Have a greater awareness of their actions, intentions and outcomes.
- Engage in provocation around theories to consider the strengths and limitations of any approach.
- Source new ways and strategies to work equitably.
- Realise theories and approaches used to frame work can both empower and limit thinking and actions.
- Reflect on how their actions can impact children's learning and leisure experiences.

Think about how you can provide educators with an understanding of what theories and influences relate specifically to your OSHC service community and why it is important to recognise these.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- Aboriginal Ways of Learning and Learning Styles – www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/1997/hughp518.pdf
- ACECQA. (2019). *The Educational Leader Resource*. Sydney, NSW: ACECQA
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia
- Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives – www.qut.edu.au/about/oodgeroo/embedding-indigenous-knowledges-in-curriculum/frameworks-and-ways-of-knowing#h2-3
- Emotional intelligence – www.learning-theories.com/emotional-intelligence-goleman.html
- *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* – www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html
- Nolan, Andrea and Raban, Bridie (2015) *Theories into Practice*, Australia: Teaching Solutions. Retrieved 18/04/18 from www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/shop/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SUND606_sample.pdf
- QCAN (2017) *Theoretical Influences for School Age Care* [Poster] – https://8801d745-805a-4dc7-baf0-c9f227b59b8c.filesusr.com/ugd/5b9443_19a5dffffb834054ae0cb2341551c64d.pdf
- Video resource: Worldviews, theories and philosophies in children's service series – www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-HOg5xASm4
- Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins – www.reggioalliance.org/downloads/malaguzzi:ccie:1994.pdf

2. EXCEEDING NQS THEMES AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

What is the link between the exceeding themes and educational leadership?

The three **Exceeding NQS themes**, introduced in February 2018, were identified specifically as common elements to high-quality education and care service provision across Australia. Their addition provides exciting opportunities for educational leadership in outside school hours care (OSHC).

Importantly, the themes will support you and your service to take an increasingly holistic approach in your understandings of and ability to drive purposeful change towards quality improvement. They offer great insight for educators and make powerful starting points for reflection that can be layered across all quality areas and aspects of practice.

The three exceeding themes complement and enhance educational leadership through focusing on strengthening of practice to ensure high quality practice. Educational leaders can use the themes to recognise and enhance how they embed, critically reflect on and shape practice within their service and community.

My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia states that:

“A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to program quality, environment design, equity and children’s wellbeing can be raised and debated.” (p13).

Exceeding themes and educational leadership

The Exceeding NQS themes and the [Professional Standards for OSHC Educators](#) both strongly focus on understanding the rationale for and building on educator practice. You may find it helpful to think about how the three domains of knowledge, practice and engagement can be aligned with and used to demonstrate the three exceeding themes.

As an educational leader, it is important to identify how you are already demonstrating the three themes in your service practice. The next step is to critique what you have identified. This should provide insights into:

- which themes are being demonstrated by which standard
- the standards where the themes are not so visible and require improvement
- areas where you recognise your practice as strong
- areas where you recognise your practice requires further development and evidence.

You should now have a clear indication of where your service practice could be strengthened and developed. Your next step is to identify opportunities and ways to improve how you embed, critically reflect on and shape your practice.

Getting practical

The following are some suggested actions to support you and your team to demonstrate the themes. You may also like to map the three domains against any actions you undertake to highlight links to the [Professional Standards for OSHC Educators](#):

- undertaking an observational exercise through inviting an external party into your service to observe and critique your practices. This could be achieved through a:
 - » mentor or critical friend
 - » representative from a professional network or professional training you have attended
 - » staff swap program with a fellow service, occurring over a set period of time. This also supports engagement with other services in your community and opportunities to reflect on the practices of other services.
- participating in a community of practice. This may include:
 - » creating a community of practice within your service to focus on strengthening a specific area of practice. This option provides opportunity to draw on the skills and knowledge of your educators, families and community members within your service space
 - » joining or establishing a community of practice within your community. This could be through a network group, a community group or with colleagues you have met through professional development and training. This option provides opportunity to draw on the combined skills and knowledge of your professional colleagues, and community organisations and representatives.
- undertaking or creating your own professional development and training. This may include:
 - » strengthening specific areas of practice through tailored professional development
 - » offering professional development opportunities to family and community members and to support and meet their needs
 - » combining the skills and knowledge of your educators, family and community members to showcase both service and community practice.
- reviewing policies and procedures in consultation with children, family members, community organisations and representatives and subject matter experts in your local community
- undertaking an open, honest and critically reflect self-assessment using the ACECQA [self-assessment tool](#)
- regularly attending and participating in community events
- organising or co-organising a community event or gathering
- introducing tailored roles with specific responsibilities to support distributed leadership and accomplish identified tasks and goals related to improvement of practice
- hosting a community event at your service
- taking part in a local community initiative or program



- organising regular excursions or programs based around children exploring, being seen in and interacting within their local community
- using reflective journals to support self and team development
- introducing staff supports to enhance wellbeing
- reviewing staff appraisal processes and procedures to increase workplace satisfaction, identify professional development opportunities and explore career pathways.

Remember to document evidence of your practice improvement actions and any outcomes. This may include collating:

- reviews and resultant enhancements to philosophy, policy and procedures
- staff and stakeholder feedback
- modifications to the staff appraisal process and related documentation
- feedback from family or community members acknowledging meaningful engagement with the service
- reports, papers, articles or blogs outlining your service's positive contribution to the local community (for example achieving social or health targets in your local area)
- certificates or awards for completion of professional development
- photos, video footage or flyers relating to community or professional development events.

Ensure you document your opportunities, actions and outcomes within your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Remember to share your attempts, progress and successes regularly across the service and with the community. It may also be helpful to document the learnings from projects or actions that may not have been as successful as planned. This will increase awareness of service practices and highlight how the service practices engagement with its families and community.

Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Demonstrating embedded practice requires a focus on high-quality, reoccurring and consistent educator practice being delivered across the service. A consistent approach to practice involves a commitment by all educators. Effective educational leadership will drive educator commitment and consistent quality practice outcomes for a service through educators' and service leaders':

- motivation
- intention
- observation
- contemplation
- communication
- implementation
- recognition.

OSHC has unique challenges associated with demonstrating this theme. These include a casual and transient workforce and (for some services) increasingly large numbers of children and families. Educational leaders understandably must be intentional, understandable, reliable and skilful in implementing strategies collaboratively with the team to embed quality in practice.

Educational leaders therefore hold a critical role in building and shaping the knowledge, skills and practice of their colleague educators. They are positioned to act as a catalyst to enable the ongoing learning of educators, both individually and collectively.

My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia states that:
Intentionality: involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. P.42

Intentionality is imperative to support working within diverse teams. Through intentionality, educators are exposed to and further develop their understandings of varying pedagogical approaches and viewpoints. As such, educational leaders empower educators to become more intentional with their expertise and pedagogy. Embedded practice is evident by educators being:

- more confident and capable in communicating their practice to others, and through documentation
- able to clearly explain the reason for their practices
- able to articulate how their practices are influenced by and align with the service philosophy. This extends to understanding how the service philosophy translates to service policies, procedures and practices
- able to articulate how their practices reflect the requirements of the National Quality Standard
- able to articulate how their practices relate to and are drawn from the approved learning framework
- consistent in their interactions, procedures, daily practices and communications.

Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

OSHC educators have a position of significant responsibility in their day-to-day work with children, families and communities. Throughout the important work that educators do, they make hundreds of decisions, some big, some little, each and every day. These decisions have consequences that impact on our various stakeholders, and critical reflection is the tool we use to determine if those choices are fair, just, and are contributing positively to children's learning and wellbeing.

Critical reflection enables educators to think deeply about the work they are doing, to identify where they have drawn their ideas from, how they might enhance their practice and to communicate how this makes them feel. This can often be a challenging process for educators and educational leaders alike. The educational leader has a role in helping educators to acknowledge and overcome challenging situations through facilitating safe and trusting collegial relationships. This supports open and reciprocal communication where alternative viewpoints are expressed and examined. Provocation and robust discussion are encouraged, as being challenged is part of the learning journey toward ethical and well-informed decision making. Having a supportive and open team can also increase the capacity for deep critical reflection.

Educational leaders also play an important role in modelling critical reflection in their own work practices and as a starting point for their ongoing professional development. While educators have differing experiences and amounts of expertise, they continue to be life-long learners, furthering their knowledge building and deepening their understandings. Critically reflective self-assessment using the Professional Standards and supplementary resources also assists educational leaders with supporting individual educators to shape and plan their learning and development. This is particularly important in OSHC as some educators are qualified, some are undertaking study, and some are yet to embark on the journey of becoming qualified. As we all have different strengths and abilities to bring to our roles, development plans should include a range of strategies tailored to the diverse strengths and interests of individual educators.

The practice of critical reflection is evident through:

- improvements to team work, team cohesion and team processes
- increased work efficiency and satisfaction by utilising individual and team strengths and abilities
- clearer and regular across team communication
- ongoing discussion, examination and evaluation of practice
- strengthening written, spoken and non-verbal communication.

Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

This theme recognises the important role that families and the community have in the lives and learning of children. Meaningful engagement with families is central to creating a sense of belonging for children. Services that have powerful engagement with their community are collaborative and adaptable with their practices to identify and meet the needs of their communities. Educational leaders therefore need to work in a way that prioritises respectful, responsive and reciprocal partnerships.



The educational leader should promote family and community engagement as ongoing, evolving and essential for their service. Engagement with both families and communities is highly beneficial in promoting reciprocity, resourcefulness, interconnectivity and a sense of accomplishment.

Educational leaders can draw on this theme to be challenged and inspired when considering how to undertake community engagement more holistically. Remember to look beyond your immediate or service community of educators, family, children and school staff as community should takes into account local, social, cultural, linguistic and historical content.

Incorporating all of these elements in a service's program and practice is a collective journey which requires dedicated time for:

- communicating and consulting with families. This includes open dialogue and intentional listening
- seeking and acting in response to family feedback
- building partnerships with families. This means families are supported and recognised for their responsibilities, skills, knowledge and contributions
- building community awareness, which relates to:
 - » developing and maintaining understandings around issues affecting your local community
 - » the roles of different people and organisations within your community
 - » acknowledging what your service knows and doesn't know about your community
 - » identifying and clarifying community perceptions and understandings about your service and its role within the community

- engaging with the community and/or community action, which relates to:
 - » working alongside or in partnership with organisations, associations and/or community representatives through targeted strategies and initiatives. (For example undertaking actions to address social issues with the aim of enhancing health and wellbeing outcomes).

Educational leaders therefore have a vital role in learning from and building on the strengths of children, families, colleagues and the community. They seek deeper insights into the wealth of knowledge, capacities, expertise and resources within families, the communities and colleagues, including professionals from local support agencies. This input, guidance or feedback from all of the stakeholders informs practice and allows this practice to be tailored to the unique service context, while actively promoting, respecting and valuing the diversity of the children, families, colleagues, and local community members.

Educational leaders who work collaboratively with their team and take a holistic approach to the ongoing cycle of quality improvement can embed the three exceeding themes in all aspects of their service practice and operations.





Practice story – Forrest Out Of School Hours Care (FOOSHC):

Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

The director sought an increase in the budget to provide for additional time at the start of the afternoon shift for a daily team chat. FOOSHC acknowledges the daily team meetings contribute to higher levels of educator professionalism, consistency of education and care, and facilitating across-team communication including sharing pertinent child, family and school information.

Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

FOOSHC holds staff professional development session each term to promote across-team reflection, discussion and provocation. The service used a session to role play having difficult conversations to support the oral communication skills and confidence building of its educators. The session was in response to observing younger staff members not feeling confident when having difficult conversations with family members.

Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

In 2017, FOOSHC established an Out Of School Hours Care (OSHC) professional network to address limitations in support available to P&C Association run OSHC services. FOOSHC engaged with a peak sector organisation to organise joint training, staff swap programs, and observation sessions.

Educational leaders have a unique opportunity to continually reflect and implement strategies to improve educator practice within OSHC. Understanding the exceeding themes and building the understanding and capacity of other educators allows you to provide the programs and practices that impact positively on each child's learning and development outcomes. It also has the potential to build the confidence of educators and service leaders to share with others (including other educators, families and regulatory authority staff) examples of great programs and practices that reflect the three exceeding themes.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- ACECQA's [Exceeding the NQS webpage](#) includes:
 - » A series of case studies that offer practical and illustrative examples of high quality practice for each quality Standard.
 - » An information sheet that provides a quick summary of the updated Exceeding guidance and resources – [Demonstrating and Assessing Exceeding National Quality Standard](#)
 - » Exceeding NQS Theme Guidance – www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=lj9ibYZYd6s
- ACECQA information sheet, New Guidance on Determining Exceeding NQS – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/23126
- ACECQA, National Quality Standard Information sheet: Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice – <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22931>
- ACECQA, National Quality Standard Information sheet: Educational leadership and team building – <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22981>
- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA.
- Australian Government (2016) [Community engagement: A key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian families, Child Family Community Australia \(CFCA\) Paper No. 39 – April 2016](#)
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012) *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- *Community Engagement: A key strategy for improving outcomes for Australian families* (CFCA Paper no.39 – April 2016)
- QCAN (2018). OSHC Professional Standards for Educators – www.oshcprofessionalstandards.org.au

3. EMBEDDING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSPECTIVES AUTHENTICALLY INTO EVERYDAY OSHC PRACTICE



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are truly unique to the Australian context. They provide children, families, educators and local community members with both cultural and historical knowledge and insight. This enhances ways of knowing and being through our relationships with others, environments, communities and Country.

My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia acknowledges “Educators recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society and provides a valid evidence base about ways of knowing.” For Australia, it also includes promoting greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.” (P12)

The National Quality Framework (NQF) acknowledges that ‘*The NQF is underpinned by a commitment to ‘Closing the Gap’ and acknowledges Australia is a nation of great diversity, and an ancient land that has been cared for by Indigenous Australians for many thousands of years. Education and care services have a shared responsibility to contribute to building a better society and sustainable environment and to support children, families, colleagues and the local community to understand, respect and value diversity. Through all aspects of their practice, educators challenge stereotyping and bias. They find sensitive and respectful ways to negotiate tensions that may arise, for instance, because of differing values, beliefs and expectations within the local context of the service, and between the local context and the broader contexts of Australian society. Educators take every opportunity to extend children’s understanding of their local context and of their wider world.*’ (Australian Government, 2018, p.10).

Educational leaders can use critical and post-structural theories and anti-bias approaches to guide their reflection and inquiry. They work with stakeholders (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) to build community, and to **facilitate collaborative knowledge development and understanding**. Outside school hours care (OSHC) communities have an opportunity to ‘find sensitive and respectful ways to negotiate existing tensions and ensure ongoing quality improvement for all stakeholders’. Work in this space is known as reconciliation – ‘*strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.*’ (Reconciliation Australia, 2017). Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali program supports OSHC services and educators across Australia to foster knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. The online



platform offers an extensive range of professional development and program resources, as well as support to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Further information can be found: www.reconciliation.org.au/narragunnawali.

How to embed and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

Before discussing how to, it's important to consider how not to. Derman-Sparks (1989) acknowledges avoiding a tourist approach when learning and teaching about cultural perspectives. This means moving beyond hosting cultural days where art, craft or music activities are used to teach children about a specific culture. While educators may believe these are genuine cultural experiences for children, they can inadvertently lead to teaching and embedding cultural assumptions and tokenistic practices rather than respectfully embedding, learning about and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Educational leaders need to be mindful that embedding also relates to the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values associated with the perspectives being shared.

Educators may often source what they believe are appropriate cultural activities and stories. While having good intentions, such actions do not take into account the need for consultation, involvement and relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and community members and representatives. Unintentionally, these actions demonstrate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and community members that educators lack cultural competence and cultural awareness.

Getting practical

There are many different ways that an educational leader can encourage and support the embedding of and reflection on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. How you do this will be unique to your service type, your child and family needs and take into consideration staff knowledge and understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and being comfortable with teaching such perspectives.

At a foundational level, you need to ensure the practices and processes you are embedding are founded on, acknowledge and respond to your local context, observe local and national cultural protocols and draw on the knowledge of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family members, children and educators
- local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community representatives, organisations or groups
- local and current research from Council, Government, health organisations and peak bodies and organisations which represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, such as [The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care](#) (SNAICC).

You may find the [8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning](#) helpful in developing, enhancing or refining your service processes focused on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. When delivering cultural content, it's important to consider the processes (ways or actions) that accompany the perspectives you are embedding.

You may also like to adapt the four career stages (Foundational, Developing, Proficient and Lead) found within the [Professional Standards for OSHC Educators](#) to determine what stage, skill and comfortability level your educators have in regards to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Important elements to consider when embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives include:

- time:
 - » adequate time is provided to educators for research, community consultation and relationship and trust building
 - » there is dedicated time within the program for exploring and unpacking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
 - » there is dedicated time within staff meetings and professional development sessions to identify the level of understanding individual staff members have regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- resources:
 - » are easily accessible for children and not restricted to use only on specific calendar days
 - » are integrated and included with other resources rather than kept or seen as separate
 - » have variety and reflect both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
 - » are used throughout the service, rather than at specific times in specific areas
 - » are also available to families and educators to support their learning and understanding
 - » are accessible and outline local and community organisations that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and understandings.

- experiences:
 - » support children to become confident in challenging stereotypes and misconceptions regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - » support children to recognise, acknowledge and draw on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
 - » support children to build skills related to cultural competence. This includes children developing an awareness that different people will have different needs and beliefs due to their cultural and linguistic background
 - » support children, families and educators to engage with and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members
 - » support children and educators to engage with local spaces and resources that are of significance to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- environments:
 - » are acknowledged as culturally safe and welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- professional development:
 - » is used to develop cultural awareness and cultural competence of educators, family and community members
 - » is used to develop knowledge, understandings and relationships with local community members.

Please keep in mind:

- Aboriginal people are already experts on their own cultural experience.
- Aboriginal cultures are the oldest living and thriving cultures on the planet.
- Aboriginal cultures are diverse.
- When and how Aboriginal people learn about their cultures is a matter of self-determination.
- When and how Aboriginal people practice their cultures is a matter of self-determination.
- Non-Aboriginal people may not be able to recognise when and how Aboriginal people are practicing their cultures.
- Non-Aboriginal people are expert in their own cultures but rarely if at all are they expert in Aboriginal cultures.
- Non-Aboriginal people are not entitled to access, demand or claim to know Aboriginal cultures and when Aboriginal people are practicing them.
(Staines & Scarlet, 2018:11)

Notation: We have preserved the language used from its source including the use of the word Aboriginal, which we hold to mean ‘original inhabitants’ of this land – inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their many cultures.



Practice story – Willows OSHC

Educational leaders Cath and Mandy from the Willows OSHC in North Queensland speak to the importance of being brave and being willing to make mistakes. They work from the heart, sharing authentic aspects of their own identities to build relationships and connections with their children, families and the local elders from the Bindal and Wulgurukaba people, who are the Traditional Custodians on the country their service is based. Their advice to other educational leaders is to consider:

- Who are the Traditional Custodians of the land that you work and learn out of?
- Would your educators or stakeholders benefit from cultural awareness training?
 - » www.amnesty.org.au/skill-up/cultural-competency
 - » www.aiatsis.gov.au/core/landing
 - » www.cultural-competence.com.au
- Asking members of your local primary or high schools for guidance. Many schools have people who work specifically within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school community e.g. Community Education Counsellors (CEC), and may be open to collaboration.
- Contacting your local council to begin building connections with local family or language groups. Local libraries can also be extremely helpful, hosting lots of community events etc.
- How can the service value add to relationships with Traditional Custodians? Relationships need to be two way and not just based on the needs of the OSHC service.
- How can we get out onto Country and experience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as they are celebrated in our community? How can we turn these experiences into connections and relationships?
- Collaborating with colleagues, mentors and fellow educational leaders in the wider OSHC sector.

“Don’t be afraid to ask or make mistakes. If you make a mistake; take the advice of Elders and accept the feedback. Grow from it”



Practice story – John Paul College Outside School Hours Care (JPCOSHC)

- In 2017, JPSOSHC introduced a daily Acknowledgement of Country. In June 2018, children of various ages worked with service educators to create their own personalised acknowledgement. JPCOSHC acknowledges the acknowledgement joined children’s knowledge together, making their thoughts and learning visible regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. JPCOSHC also turned their Acknowledgement of Country into a video resource, which is shared with visitors to the service, during special events, and during professional development sessions.
- Children engaged in discussions about the upcoming elections, leaders and policies. This led to further discussions around Aboriginal rights and changes in policy throughout history. JPCOSHC used its homework club to support children to research the Uluru statement and to reflect on opportunities for everyone to be heard and have a voice.
- As part of National Reconciliation Week celebrations in 2018, JPCOSHC reflected on how to make its reception area more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and guests. This led to children creating three canvas paintings acknowledging specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, different styles of Aboriginal artwork and the message of ‘Learn, share and grow’.

Educational leaders support their team to value challenges, uncertainty and to embrace change. They encourage educators to be critically reflective (see additional information in *Section 4: Critical reflection and leadership in the context of OSHC*) by stepping back from practice, challenging assumptions using questions and dialogue, then layering different perspectives to inform new practices and better outcomes. This is vitally important when challenging bias and stereotypes and building a genuine commitment to equity, inclusion and diversity.



Resources to continue your learning

- Balnarring Pre-School, Bundjils Nest community project – www.balnarringpreschool.org.au/bundjil-nest-project
- John Paul College Outside School Hours Care, Acknowledgement of Country – www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oNryW0lucv&feature=youtu.be
- Reconciliation Australia (2015) Who we are: Country/Place – www.youtube.com/watch?v=scPVu7BASeA
- Engaging with Aboriginal communities: Where do we start? – www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/NEL/engaging-with-aboriginal-communities1.pdf
- ACECQA information sheet: Be part of Reconciliation – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22926
- Our connection to the land – www.youtube.com/watch?v=av3SeQpn37o
- Walking on Country: Ngurambangga Yanhanha – www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQ-HBDqySaU
- SNAICC Fact sheet: Promoting, exploring and sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures: Children are connected with and contribute to their world – www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/snaicc-fact-sheets/snaicc-training-factsheet-2.pdf
- Grant, S. (2016). *Talking to My Country*. Sydney, NSW. Harper Collins Publishers.
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (2017) *Aboriginal people in Queensland: a brief human rights history*, Queensland: Author.
- Australian Government (2018) Guide to the National Quality Framework, NSW: ACECQA
- Common Ground First Nations (n.d.) Aboriginal, Indigenous or First Nations? Retrieved 17/09/19 from www.commonground.org.au/learn/aboriginal-or-indigenous

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012) *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Pascoe, Bruce (2012) *The Little Red Yellow Black Book – An introduction to Indigenous Australia* (3rd ed.), Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Reconciliation Australia (2017) *What is Reconciliation?* Retrieved 17/09/19 from www.reconciliation.org.au/what-is-reconciliation
- Reconciliation Australia (2017) *Narragunnawali* Retrieved 17/09/19 from www.reconciliation.org.au/narragunnawali
- Staines, Jessica and Scarlet, Red Ruby (2018) *The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide*, Australia: MultiVerse Publishing.
- Yunkaporta, Tyson (2019) *Sand Talk*, Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company. www.aiatsis.gov.au/core/landing/video
- Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children*. Washington DC: NAEYC.
- Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (2019): *Cultural competence in Australia: A guide* – www.fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Cultural-Competence-in-Australia-A-Guide.pdf

4. CRITICAL REFLECTION AND LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF OSHC SETTINGS

Outside school hours care (OSHC) provides a unique education and care context, affording considerations for an educational leader to build on education system strategies that can be implemented to lead teams, engage children and families in learning, and build connections with communities. In OSHC, educational leaders come from a range of backgrounds and may work with a team that can often include a transient and casual workforce, as well as children and families only using the service for short periods of time and not always in a regular pattern. They may also work in a variety of environments, some of which may not be purpose built. This gives educational leaders a greater opportunity, some may say challenge, to engage with children, families, teams and the community in many ways and utilise team members' varied skills and attributes. While these factors may pose a challenge to educational leadership, it also provides opportunities for growth as individuals develop their leadership skills.

My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (MTOF) provides educational leaders with principles, practices and outcomes that support all children's meaningful participation in the program. In particular, the framework regularly refers to the increased social competencies of school age children and the important role in driving change through consistent and collaborative critical reflection.

A key responsibility of the educational leader is to support educators to embed critical reflection in practice. By engaging in critical reflection, educators, teachers and other staff closely examine their pedagogical practices from different perspectives. This includes drawing on their own skills, experience and knowledge.

Workforce diversity

As an educational leader, it is important to value the diverse qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience within the team. In OSHC, it is often the case that educators hold or are studying qualifications in other fields and disciplines. This may prompt educational leaders to consider the various ways they can build the knowledge and capacity of the team and learn from each other. Strategies to build capacity may include:

- Developing different opportunities, strategies and regular time for educators to build an understanding of the learning framework, and its application.
- Engaging team members in professional development opportunities, which could include workshops, as well as networking and mentoring relationships.
 - » Page 32 of *The Educational Leader Resource* outlines strategies that educational leaders can implement to further support and facilitate professional development. Professional development can encourage and inform professional educator practice through research, theories, content knowledge and current issues in the children's education and care sector.
- Implementing a comprehensive induction process for new educators, including casual educators. Induction allows educational leaders to engage new team members with the service philosophy and expectations of their role.

A workforce of diverse professionals presents opportunities to leverage and utilise the skills, strengths and interests of the team.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critically reflect about the diversity of educators in the service, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- How do we encourage and facilitate opportunities for educators to share their skills and knowledge with other team members?
- What opportunities can we put in place for educators to take part in professional development that aligns with the service philosophy?
- How do we contribute to the service strategies for retaining casual or transient educators?



Understanding meaningful leisure

In school age care meaningful leisure describes the opportunities for children to develop their imagination, social ability and the sense of community including participation, collaboration and responsibility.

Educational leaders in OSHC support educators to understand the difference between play, play-based learning and leisure, and the opportunities they afford children in conjunction with their formal education experience. They are mindful to complement (rather than duplicate or merely extend) the school day, and pay particular attention to the spontaneous aspects of the OSHC program and its rich play and leisure opportunities. Leisure time experiences constructed by children and supported by informed educators

promote children’s dynamic, complex and holistic learning. MTOP (pages 8-10) outlines the value of children’s learning through opportunities of play.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critically reflect about meaningful leisure in the service, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- How do we incorporate leisure activities for each age group in all of our sessions?
- What can we do to involve children in development of the leisure activities in the program?
- How do we view leisure in OSHC, and what can we share with families to increase their understanding of leisure?

Adapting learning environments

Physical environments in OSHC play an important role in supporting the wellbeing, learning and development of school age children. They are not a mere backdrop to a service’s curriculum, but rather an integral part of a service’s leisure based program. Environments that are well-resourced and aesthetically pleasing, foster engagement in learning and promote social interactions.

It is common for OSHC services that operate within the grounds of a school to utilise shared spaces such as classrooms, halls and playgrounds. Often these spaces are not purpose built for OSHC, and the use of these spaces can sometimes be subject to restraints (for example restrictions relating to moving furniture, storing resources, or running certain activities in these shared spaces).

Educators who recognise and value the environment as a ‘third teacher’ find opportunities to be creative and innovative in the use of spaces and resources. Behind educators and families, physical spaces hold the potential to influence what and how children learn. Recognising the importance of utilising the physical environment can inspire educational leaders to proactively explore how they will unlock the potential of any physical space. Unlocking this potential begins with critical reflection and thinking about strategies to inspire educators to consider the space at your service and its potential to influence what and how children learn.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critically reflect about the service environment, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- How can the physical environment be adapted to include all children and provide for their needs and interests?
- How is the environment equipped and organised to cater for all ages and levels of capabilities?
- How does the physical space support children to build meaningful relationships with each other and the educators?
- How are indoor and outdoor spaces arranged to support children's access to materials and equipment?

In guiding the development and implementation of critically reflective practices about service space, educational leaders may also act as a link between key school contacts, such as principals, administrative staff, and teachers, as well as the broader OSHC team. Educational leaders often have or develop, a comprehensive understanding of operating issues or constraints relating to the use of shared spaces. This understanding can be helpful in influencing decision making and changes relating to the physical environment that may have been inspired by critical reflection.



Transitions between educational settings

Educational leaders play a critical role in supporting educators understanding of the transition of children and families between educational settings. This can include between early education and school/OSHC, school to OSHC, and OSHC to school. It's important that educational leaders facilitate this by bringing the team together to critically reflect on the impact that this has for children and families, the expectations of children and families, and how to support children and families in a responsive way.

Families transitioning from early education and care settings will also have expectations relating to their child's (or children's) experiences in OSHC. Providing opportunities for families to engage with educational leaders on how children's learning, wellbeing and development is supported in the OSHC has the potential to not only improve outcomes for children, but also raise the profile of the OSHC services as part of their journey through education and care. As part of this, teams can reflect on how families have viewed documentation on their children's learning within early education and care services, and what this means for the documentation that occurs in OSHC. The learning framework identifies the importance of sharing appropriate information about each child's capabilities and interests to ensure smooth and supported transitions between settings.

Some OSHC services provide education and care for multiple schools so transitions are occurring at multiple times and in multiple ways. Effective leadership in an OSHC service can lead to the smooth operation of and transitions between services.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critical reflect about transitions in the service, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- What do you consider to be an important aspect of transitions for children?
- How have families at the service been involved in the development of transition strategies for their child, and what has been communicated to them?
- How can transitions be used as a learning and development opportunity for children in OSHC?

Sessions of education and care

The concept of 'time' is a consideration in regards to children's engagement in OSHC, and educational leaders take this into account when implementing programs and reflecting on practices. It's important that educational leaders are able to effectively support the team to be responsive to individual needs of children and to be innovative in their approaches to the many different sessions of education and care offered to children. The aim of Quality Area 5 is to promote relationships with children that are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging. Educators fostering strong relationships that align with this quality area, encourage children to explore the environment and engage in play and learning.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critical reflect about sessions offered at the service, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- What differences exist in the children's program within the different sessions?
- How do children engage in the different sessions?
- What do you consider to be an important aspect of each session?
- What are some of the challenges in each session and what can we change to improve?
- What works well in the different sessions, can these practices be implemented in different sessions?

Team consistency and retention

Leadership attributes such as enthusiasm, integrity and commitment contribute to educator retention. Educational leaders play a pivotal role in supporting, motivating and inspiring the educator teams and building a collaborative approach to their work with children. This can assist in developing with educators a shared purpose and connections with the service philosophy. Effective educational leaders foster team collaboration and implement practices to foster team retention and consistency. Example practices include:

- Providing opportunities for professional development and learning from experienced educators at the service.
- Fostering a strengths-based approach by recognising and using the skills, knowledge and experience of the team.
- Coaching and mentoring new educators – and pairing educators with suitable team mates to learn about children's needs, strengths and interests.

The diversity of educators can also offer significant benefits when they have other skills and interests to share with children in a meaningful leisure context, examples include skills in drama, music, sports and art. The role of the educational leader is to motivate and inspire these educators to support and guide the play and leisure opportunities for children at the service.



Reflective questions

When leading the team to critical reflect about consistent and retention of the team at the service, educational leaders could use the following questions to prompt discussion, reflection and brainstorming:

- Why do educators choose to stay at the service and how do you find out these reasons?
- How does the team respond to educators joining or leaving the service?
- What strategies are implemented to retain staff and build consistency for children and families?

Educational leaders have many different opportunities for developing their skills as leaders in their service. In fact, opportunities can sometimes be disguised as challenges that require creative and innovative ‘out of the box’ thinking to realise their potential impacts and advantages. In your role as an educational leader, using critical reflection to tackle the big issues and promote quality improvement, will help to bring the educators and staff along the journey with you.

Resources and references for ongoing learning

- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/23811
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24641
- ACECQA information sheet, Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22931
- ACECQA information sheet, The environment as the third teacher – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22956

5. LEADING THE CYCLE OF PLANNING IN SCHOOL AGE CARE

An educational leader supports educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance educational programs and practices. Leading, developing and maintaining a cycle of planning is a role that the educational leader can embrace in an outside school hours care (OSHC) service. Implementing the cycle of planning with the educators at your service places children's current knowledge, strengths, culture, abilities, ideas and interests at the centre of their work.

A key focus of Standard 7.2 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) is that an educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle. The educational leader will assist educators to develop the skills necessary to articulate the how and why of educational program and practice decisions with each other, families and children. An educational leader can help build educators' understanding of the cycle of planning for each child by:

- providing guidance on educators' pedagogy and professional practice
- supporting educators to build and nurture secure respectful relationships with children and families.

What does the legislation require?

For school age children, evaluation of wellbeing and learning refers to the process of scanning, monitoring, gathering and analysing information about how children feel and what children know, can do and understand (*My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, p.16).

The National Law and National Regulations do not prescribe how the cycle of planning should be done. However, the educational leader is well placed to provide guidance and build collaboration in the team to lead a successful cycle of planning. A well planned and implemented cycle of planning supports educators to capture meaningful information about the children and the families attending the service.

For information on the documentation requirements for school age care, download the ACECQA information sheet: [Documenting programs for school age services](#).

Getting practical

Educational leaders first need to consider what their service planning cycle requirements are. The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (NQF) provides guidance on the requirements you need to meet at your service. Also, when it comes to developing strategies to ensure the success of the cycle of planning, it is important to:

- refer to your service's policy on the children's program, documentation and cycle of planning
- review your service philosophy and think about how that will shape your work with educators and children.

Each service is unique, with different strengths and challenges. Spend some time thinking and discussing with educators the aspects of the service that will be taken into consideration when leading educators through the cycle of planning.



Collaborate with educators to brainstorm and identify opportunities for improvement, taking into consideration the:

- attendance of children – casual, vacation care or morning and afternoon sessions
- children – their age, ability and willingness to contribute in their own way to the cycle of planning
- school age focus of play and leisure opportunities – developed to be meaningful to each child
- number of children in different spaces – where can children go and where do children play (for example in large halls, purpose built spaces, large outdoor spaces and in shared spaces)?
- skill and knowledge level of the services casual educators – what do they bring to the cycle of planning? Tap into the variety of skills and knowledge of each educator
- legislative requirements that guide policies and program documentation and focus.

The cycle of planning

The cycle of planning involves carefully reflecting on each part of the process to ensure the program on offer enhances each child’s wellbeing, learning and development. When educators are led to carefully plan all aspects of service delivery, it ensures children are not only achieving outcomes, but that it is of interest, relevance and suitability to the children attending that particular service.

The planning cycle process includes:

- Observation
- Analysing learning

- Documentation
- Planning
- Implementation, and
- Reflection.

Educational leaders lead educators to carefully plan all aspects of the cycle of planning to ensure that each child’s wellbeing, learning and development is incorporated within the service program.

The cycle of planning takes into consideration how the program is planned and implemented in a variety of ways and spaces at the service. Use a staff meeting to brainstorm with educators the spaces and routines that are considered in your current cycle of planning. Develop strategies to ensure the following are included:

- The activities planned for morning, afternoon and vacation care sessions
- The physical environment, including transition spaces
- The routines and procedures in place for children, families and educators
- The educator’s interactions and involvement with children, families and each other.

Strategies for leading the planning cycle

The following are a range of strategies educational leaders might implement in their important role leading the assessment and planning cycle:

- During team meetings, focus and analyse the purpose of each stage of the learning cycle. Chapter three of the *Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* deconstructs the cycle in detail and outlines activities which can be undertaken with educators.
- Mentor, lead and monitor all educators to develop an effective system of ongoing program planning based on observations of children and critical reflecting on practice.
- Listen to each team member’s feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies linked to the cycle of planning.
- For all new educators, spend time introducing them to the service, outlining their specific role and responsibilities and explaining the service’s cycle of planning. On the ACECQA website, there are several OSHC specific educational games designed to support the knowledge and understanding of new educators.
- Role model the use of professional terminology within the service. Use the glossary in the *Guide to the NQF* as well as *Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* to build a common understanding of the language used in the cycle of planning.
- Motivate and support educators to discuss with (and where appropriate, involve) children and their families, the cycle of planning.
- Encourage critical reflection of practices by introducing new theories, research, ideas and case studies to all educators on a regular basis.

- Undertake action research at your service to explore issues relevant to your service and test identified strategies for improvement.
- Focus on children as a vital part of the planning cycle: discover their strengths, include groups of children as well as individuals in reflections.
- Ensure documentation:
 - » is accessible and meaningful to families and children
 - » provided to children includes a clear evaluation of their own wellbeing, development and learning
 - » is focused on extending children’s learning and builds on their interests and strengths
 - » reflects a balanced program; combining experiences based on each child’s interests and strengths with planned opportunities that support learning and wellbeing.

Leading the cycle of planning is an ongoing process that evolves as educators become more confident and experienced with the strategies developed and put in place. It is important to also monitor the implementation of the planning cycle and the strategies to ensure it remains effective, sustainable and achievable at your service.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24641
- Department of Education and Training (2011). *My Time, Our Place – Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24631
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia – www.education.gov.au/my-time-our-place
- ACECQA, Quest for Quality Knowledge Game – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/23086 – Quality Area 1 Game
- ACECQA Information Sheet, Documenting Programs For School Age Services – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24656
- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA.

6. SUPPORTING EDUCATORS TO CREATE MEANINGFUL DOCUMENTATION IN OSHC



The importance of creating meaningful documentation in OSHC

The educational leader can directly contribute to the quality, viability and reputation of the children’s education and care service by working with educators to document the learning, development and wellbeing program and ensure that families understand it (ACECQA, *The Educational Leader Resource*, p58).

Supporting and leading the development of meaningful documentation can be challenging for outside school hours care (OSHC) educational leaders and educators, especially when working with a sometimes casual and transient workforce. Planned documentation can also be difficult when educating and caring for children of a various ages, with sometimes unpredictable attendance patterns and time at the service.

Over time, ACECQA has identified through assessment and rating data that Standard 1.3: Assessment and planning is consistently identified as one of the standards that requires the most improvement (ACECQA, 2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2020d).

Educational leaders can lead and support educators to be creative and reflective in their documentation approaches. Educational leaders and educators can also collaboratively develop documentation processes that recognise and respond to the unique context of their service, children and community.

The *Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* (pg 74) outlines three important reasons to document learning and leisure. They are to:

1. inform program planning
2. deepen understanding of the children at the service
3. make learning visible and share it with others.

Approaching documentation with the sole focus of meeting regulatory obligations will unlikely generate engagement or connection with children and families. The NQS encourages educators and educational leaders to use their professional judgement and to be creative and innovative in the way the standards are met. For example, the age and capabilities of the children in OSHC provide an opportunity for involving them in the process of planning, evaluation and documentation (Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia, pg 72).



Practice story – MacGregor OSHC

“MacGregor OSHC is a large multicultural service with over 40 staff. The distributed leadership model that we have adopted contributes to our holistic approach to the educational leader role. All members of the team take turns leading and being led. We celebrate our differences and strive to utilise each other’s skills and passions to contribute to an innovative and diverse program that caters to all 450 students in our care. More recently the formalization of a lead educator program within our OSHC has supported this model and has seen our program evolve further. Our documentation has been richer and has led to greater critical reflection on all facets of our service. We aim to never sit dormant and are constantly analysing and evolving our practices to best meet the needs of our community and stakeholders.”

Amanda Lowe – Operations Manager

In OSHC you can use documentation to:

- provide validity for, and reflection of, our work practices in relation to each quality area
- make our thinking visible to your children, families, community members and other stakeholders
- enable conversations and communication amongst stakeholders
- build educator skill and knowledge about context, theory and pedagogy
- build an evidence base of children’s thinking, learning and development
- share and enhance understandings of children’s learning and development
- seek child and family input to extend learning
- identify possibilities for future learning and development for individual and groups of children.

Creating meaningful documentation in OSHC

There are many ways that educators can adopt a planned and thoughtful approach to implementing the program for each child and to evaluate wellbeing and learning. In OSHC settings, there will be a stronger emphasis on play and recreation and this will be reflected in the methods and content of the curriculum documentation (ACECQA, *The Educational Leader Resource*, p28).

A key aspects of the educational leader's role in leading, developing and implementing the program includes mentoring and supporting educators' understanding of educational program and practice as well as developing documentation that is meaningful, relevant and promotes reflection on educators' pedagogy and practice (ACECQA, *The Educational Leader Resource*, pg 17). For documentation to be meaningful, educational leaders need to start with making the purpose both visible and evident for all educators. This purpose then becomes the foundation of your planning cycle, intentionally designing how documentation will be created and used.



Reflective question:

How can a collaborative approach ensure documentation is meaningful, relevant and informs your work with children and families?

Collaboration is key

Educational leaders are encouraged to work collaboratively with their service team to consider the service's methods for evaluation, documentation and implementation of the planning cycle. These methods will reflect the unique context of the service and be based on contemporary pedagogical theories that inform a service's practice.

A shared vision and approach about how to achieve best learning outcomes for children will enable the educational leader to effectively unite a team of educators to work towards a consistent approach to curriculum.

Effective documentation will enable educators to see themselves as increasingly skilled in improving outcomes for children and families. Educational leaders might approach mentoring and guiding educators in their own unique way, enabling educators to develop and display documentation that is accessible and reflective of child and family needs.

Creating and using documentation occurs across all steps of the cycle of planning.

When each educator offers and shares their perspectives and insights into the planning cycle it supports a culture of reflective practice and encourages the abilities and growth of others. Recording meaningful information to share with families and authorised officers will demonstrate your process of critical reflection and how it informs your practice (ACECQA information sheet, QA1 Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice).

Through effective educational leadership, educators' abilities and competencies can be enhanced over time with opportunities for learning. Building a community of practice approach with educators as they learn and use documentation will enable them to continue learning even when you are not present. A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wegner and Synder, 2000 cited in Maine, 2010).

Your role as an educational leader is to facilitate this learning, remembering that collaboration and incorporating multiple perspectives is central to creating quality documentation in OSHC. A community of practice approach reflects the importance of equity, inclusion and diversity that underpin the National Quality Framework (NQF).

A community of practice approach in action



Practice story – Camp Hill OSHC

“The educational leader’s role in documentation is to support sharing and collaboration. Documentation without sharing remains merely opinion; whereas shared information allows for opinion to be challenged and critical reflection to occur. The leadership team at Camp Hill OSHC promote sharing through several different methods. Along with team meetings daily where lead educators lead discussion and debate, the management team facilitates a “private” Facebook group where staff can write their observations, thoughts and evaluations. As opposed to valuable information being lost in a pile of paperwork, this method allows the entire team to see other opinions, points of view, and even offer their own perspective to expand upon original posts. This gives the entire team an opportunity to critically reflect on their own points of view, expand and develop their knowledge, and scaffold others to do the same”.

Angus Gorrie – Program Manager from Camp Hill OSHC



Applying an inclusive approach into documentation practices

Documentation is not just about educators, it's important to include children and families in the 'why' behind documentation. Educational leaders should work to ensure that the processes used to capture the voices of their stakeholders, don't unwillingly omit particular groups. For example, individuals or groups who may not use English as a first language. To be fair and equitable, a variety of documentation options should be considered to address the needs and skill of all your stakeholders in your OSHC community.

One way to ensure that you are including the voices of children and families is to ask or survey your children and families about how they might like to view your service's documentation. For example, an online application that allows multiple users to view information about their child's wellbeing and development may be useful for family members who live interstate or overseas.

Keep in mind that there are a multitude of different ways to document in OSHC services and no one way is the correct one. Each service will approach it differently, according to the needs of their educators, children and families. You may wish to consider some of the following different options for documentation:

- Anecdotes
- Audio recordings
- Comments, narratives and explanations
- Critical reflections
- Diagrams & sketches
- Jottings/journaling
- Learning stories
- Program cycle maps
- Pictorial graphs and charts
- Photographs
- Running records
- Sample drawing/ painting/work
- Storylines
- Texts created by children
- Transcripts of conversations
- Video recordings
- Webs of thinking/mind maps

There are also a variety of different ways that this information can be stored, displayed or communicated. These include (but are not limited to):

Digital (electronic) <i>*privacy requirements should be considered for these options.</i>	Physical (hard-copy and paper-based)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locked pages on service websites • Social media platforms (Facebook etc.) • Electronic displays on site • Applications that can be used on computers or mobile phones • Digital portfolios shared via USB drives, emails or other means • Hard drive storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journals • Folders • Floor books • Diaries • Scrapbooks • Posters • Displays • Photo albums • Vision boards • Notice boards • School newsletters

Deciding what to document

It can feel overwhelming to document everything that occurs at your service. Therefore, it's important to consider how your service approaches documentation and think about the important moments that could be used in your documentation. Think about why you are documenting a certain moment in your day and reflect on how it's significant to your program and practice.

Something to consider is whether educators have a focus on groups of children or whether educators can document for all children and include how children are learning as well as aspects of their wellbeing. It may be useful to have a system in place that gives your documentation strategies structure and purpose so that information and resources don't overlap.

Think about your children's attendance and consider how you document for children who attend one session a week compared with children who attend all sessions. You may wish to think about whether documentation should be created for individual children, small groups or the group as a whole. The social nature of OSHC settings may allow for more flexibility in documenting for small groups rather than for each child, although some children may benefit from individualised documentation.

Lastly, think about how your service seeks feedback from children and families about program documentation. Receiving and using feedback supports your documentation to be meaningful.

Ethical considerations

Educational leaders need to work with their community to ensure they are meeting their specific and contextual needs, especially as those needs change and evolve over time. Being aware of the cultural norms, requirements and protocols of children and families at the service will support the creation of respectful and ethical documentation. For example, it is important to be mindful to remove imagery of deceased Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons.

It is important to consider the ethical implications of documentation for stakeholders. For example, seeking permission from families and children to take and use images of children is vital. Additionally, some cultures find imagery of sleeping or resting children offensive. For further information on ethics, you can refer to the [OSHC Code of Ethical Practice](#).

In OSHC services, the program nurtures the development of life skills and complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships at school, at home and in the community. Through meaningful and engaging documentation informed by a collaborative approach, an educational leader can see these outcomes realised in the most effective way.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- ACECQA We Hear You blog: How we document – Albury Out of School Hours – www.wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2015/05/21/how-we-document-albury-out-of-school-hours
- ACECQA We Hear You blog: Documentation – what, why and how – www.wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/category/documentation
- ACECQA We Hear You blog: Documentation – Are we there yet? – www.wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2017/05/24/documentation-are-we-there-yet
- ACECQA information Sheet: Documenting Programs for School Age Children – <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24656>
- ACECQA information Sheet – QA1 – Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22931
- Community Child Care, Rethinking the Significance of Educational Leadership in OSHC – www.cccinc.org.au/docs/educational-leadership--2016-ccc-oshc-conference.pdf
- Queensland Children's Activity Network (QCAN) Action Research Projects – www.qcan.org.au
- Queensland Children's Activity Network (QCAN) OSHC Code of Ethical Practice – https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/5b9443_ee9219204e544b6eae39509863c7e74d.pdf
- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA.

- ACECQA NQF Snapshot– *A quarterly report from the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority*, NSW: ACECQA (2013 – 2020)
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012) *Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.



7. ONGOING LEARNING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Ongoing learning and reflective practice features are one of the key pedagogical principles of the *My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (MTOF)* (p.12), and its capabilities are integral to the role of the educational leader.

Effective educational leaders encourage a commitment to ongoing learning, and use their knowledge to mentor educators to reflect on current practices individually, with each other and in collaboration with children in OSHC. *The Educational Leader Resource* identifies knowledge and reflection as two of the four dimensions of effective educational leadership (p.81 & p.84).

School age care educational leaders empower educator teams to apply these dimensions and principles to strengthen every day practice with and for school age children.

What is ongoing learning and reflective practice?

MTOF describes reflective practice as a 'form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's wellbeing and development. As professionals, educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change' (p.12).

Nurturing a culture of critical reflection supports educators to consider events and experiences from different perspectives with the aim to understand and strengthen their own practices. In school age care this includes making considered decisions about the strategies used to plan leisure-based experiences to promote children's learning, development and wellbeing.



The importance of ongoing learning and reflective practice is identified in Quality Areas 1, 4 and 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), and central to Standard 1.3. Critical reflection is embedded in the three Exceeding NQS themes, and specific to Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Reflective practice can be linked to the works of Schon and Dewey. Dewey ‘suggested that reflective thinking means turning a subject over in the mind to give it serious consideration, enabling one to act in a deliberate and intentional manner’ (*The Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, p. 6). Schon mentions educators engage in three types of reflection – reflection in action, reflection on action and reflection for action (QA1 Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice, p.2).

Getting practical

Implementing reflective practice in OSHC

The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* identifies that engaging in critical reflection encourages educators to ‘reflect in detail on all aspects of the program, their professional practice, and children’s learning and development’ (p.123).

Educational leaders consider the unique context and complexities of OSHC services when leading and empowering educators to be reflective and to engage in reflective discussions. Being mindful of the diverse range of age groups and large numbers and attendance patterns of the children that attend the service, as well as the split shifts, ages, employment type and training or qualifications of educators, all guide when, how and who will be involved in reflective discussions.

When to reflect?

Reflective practice is an ongoing cycle of review. It can occur during experiences (in action), after experiences (on action) or for future experiences (for action).

OSHC is represented by a variety of attendance patterns including before and after school and vacation care. It is also most often co-located within a school or other community facility. Thinking creatively about how to overcome challenges such as time and space constraints, provides educators with the opportunity to take a step back to reflect on their practice, and to engage in reflective discussions with other educators.

The ACECQA information sheet: Developing a Culture of Learning through Reflective Practice suggests looking at and reviewing current routines might be one way of finding space and time to support a commitment to reflective practice.

Considerations could include:

- providing extended periods of uninterrupted time for educators to closely observe children during play
- scheduling reflection time in rosters for educators to reflect individually or
- scheduling or allowing for spontaneous reflection time between the educational leader and educator (p.3).

In addition, the following ways to find time for reflection might also be considered.

- Adding reflective discussions as either a standing agenda item in regular team meetings, or as a separate reflective practice meeting.
- Developing and committing to a meeting timeframe.
- Considering holding spontaneous meetings that are shorter in time such as stand up or minute meetings.
- Providing time for professional learning that informs reflective discussions.

How to reflect?

Reflection involves questioning, challenging, re-thinking and sometimes changing practices. Questions to help guide reflection can be found in the *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, MTOP, the *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* and *The Educational Leader Resource*. These questions could be used to guide reflection on practice, and to prompt reflective discussions with the aim to identify individual and service strengths, and areas for improvement.

Building knowledge and engaging in professional learning also supports reflective practices. Some ways might include professional reading, networking with sector colleagues or attending relevant professional development. Educational leaders can reflect on the strategies currently used and their team's current skills and attributes to build a professional learning and enquiry community, and identify if they have been successful.

Further reflective questions and suggestions on how to reflect such as engaging in action research, guided reflection and the 'circles of change' model of reflection can be found in *The Educational Leader Resource*.

Who to reflect with?

Effective leaders create trusting and respectful relationships where team members feel safe to reflect on their practices, and identify areas for improvement. Reflecting on practice individually, with the educational leader and with other educators is the obvious choice of who to reflect with.

To promote a culture of enquiry and drive quality improvements, reflecting with children, families, the school and the wider community could also be considered. Involving school age children in the reflection process is encouraged as it promotes a sense of agency and empowers them to take a leading role in planning and delivering the program (*Guide to the National Quality Framework*, p.101).

Critical reflection informs change and leads to action. Including all parties in the reflection process strengthen relationships, and develops a shared responsibility to deliver better outcomes for children and families.

What to reflect on?

The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* identifies that engaging in critical reflection encourages educators to ‘reflect in detail on all aspects of the program, their professional practice, and children’s learning and development’ (p.123). In school age care this includes making considered decisions about the strategies used to plan leisure-based experiences to promote children’s learning, development and wellbeing.

Educational leaders can support educators to reflect on their practices; educational programs; the assessment and planning cycle; principles, practices and outcomes of the approved learning framework; curriculum decisions; children’s learning, development and wellbeing; the service philosophy and so on.

Resources to support your ongoing learning

Approved Learning Frameworks

- *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24641
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* – www.education.vic.gov.au/Childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx#link36

Critical reflection

- ACECQA information sheet: Quality Area 1—Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22931
This information sheet explores ways of building partnerships with families and will help educational leaders discover the benefits of working in partnership.
- ACECQA video: A critical reflection planning meeting.
In this video, Warrawee Care Centre staff members demonstrate how a service can use critical reflection in its planning meetings – www.youtu.be/UTAMkYmFVAo
- Rethinking the Significance of Educational Leadership in OSHC Educational leadership in OSHC, 2016 conference.
Learn more about the impact of reflection and collaboration on teaching and learning in OSHC – www.cccinc.org.au/docs/educational-leadership--2016-ccc-oshc-conference.pdf
- Critical Reflection – An article published by Gowrie and written by Queensland University of Technology lecturer Melinda Miller – [https://eprints.qut.edu.au/79260/1/Critical Reflection - Gowrie Article.pdf](https://eprints.qut.edu.au/79260/1/Critical%20Reflection%20-%20Gowrie%20Article.pdf)

Guides

- *Educators My Time, Our Place: Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/24631
- ACECQA, *Guide to the National Quality Framework* – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/23811

Ongoing learning

- ACECQA Information Sheet: Quality Area 4 – Belonging, being and becoming for Educators
This information sheet explores ways the approved learning frameworks can be used to foster educators’ own sense of belonging, being and becoming and how they could grow as professionals – www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22961
- ACECQA: We Hear You – Mentoring Matters
This article explores 10 key mentoring understandings to support educational leaders to strengthen educators’ professional development and growth and build capacity – www.wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2018/10/08/mentoring-matters

Resources for meetings

- ECRH: Conducting staff meetings—agendas and outcomes (designed for OSHC)
This resource guides educators and staff from outside school hours care (OSHC) settings in planning and running staff meetings. It is also relevant to other service types within the children’s education and care sector – www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/conducting-staffmeetings-agendas-and-outcomes.pdf?sfvrsn=6
- Edutopia Video: 60 second strategy—stand-up meetings
Faculty members from a school in Philadelphia, US, show how they hold their stand-up meetings – www.youtu.be/bNe5Xx42meQ

Action Research

- Website: A beginner’s guide to action research.
This webpage provides more detail about action research and how to implement and lead effective action research – www.aral.com.au/resources/guide.html
- AITSL video: Action research for professional learning
This Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) video looks at two teachers who are trialling team teaching in a secondary science and mathematics environment. Although set within the context of secondary schools, the process also applies to children’s education and care – www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/action-research-for-professionallearning-illustration-of-practice
- Video: What is action research? This video provides a short description of action research – www.youtu.be/Ov3F3pdhNkk

References

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2018). Quality Area 1: Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice. Retrieved from www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22931
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2012). *Educators’ Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education and Training (DET). (2016). *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*. Melbourne, Vic.: State of Victoria.



8. ENGAGING WITH ACTION RESEARCH IN OSHC

Action research can be an empowering experience for an educational leader and the educators they work with. It can have a profound and positive effect on their practice and continuous improvement journey.

How to engage with action research in OSHC

Action research can be defined as a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action within a service in an effort to respond to ‘real world’ problems. The process works best when conducted as a collaborative partnership between educators, educational leaders and providers and in outside school hours care (OSHC), and also wherever possible school staff.

One of the primary benefits of action research is that it is always relevant and meaningful to the participants. This is because the focus of each research project is determined by the educator team (as researchers), who embark on an inquiry process to find solutions to challenges or new ways of thinking about their practice. It is research happening at the same time as changes to practice (action).

Action research helps educator teams become more effective at what they care most about—the provision of high quality programs for children. The greatest professional reward for educators comes from positively influencing children’s lives, contributing to their wellbeing and learning creating a sense of belonging, being and becoming. When educators have convincing evidence that their work has made a real difference in the outcomes for children, the hours of planning, reflecting, documenting and researching are visibly worthwhile.

The action research process is cyclic, much like the cycle of planning that educators regularly engage with. It requires a systematic and disciplined way of thinking and is a sequential approach to problem solving. An educational leader can build their confidence in facilitating an effective action research project by attending professional development. This will help ensure the methodology is applied with rigour and validity.

The underpinning principle of action research is that it is ‘your work, not more work’. It is research in action (what we are doing now) rather than research about action (what has been done). While a significant investment of time and thinking is required to engage effectively in action research, it should be used as a means to improve practice through deeper thinking and informed ideas.

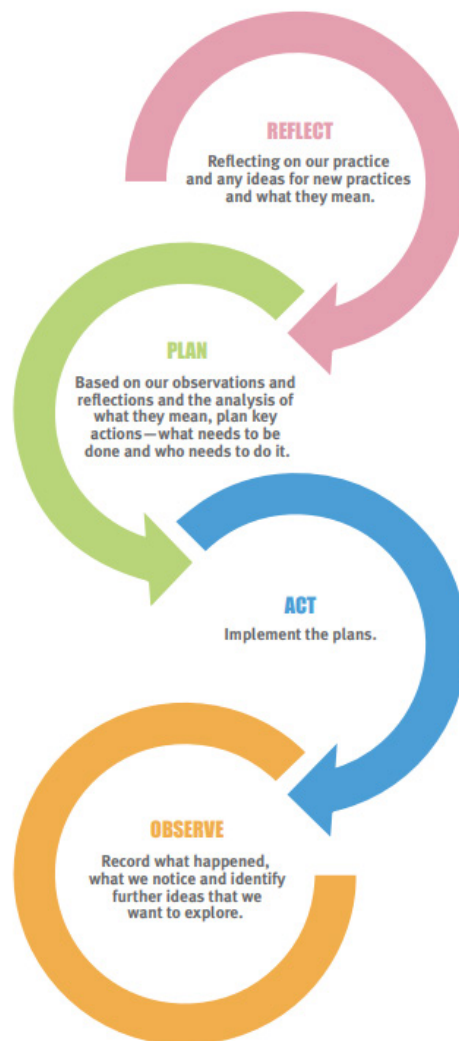
Action research has some important features. As an inquiry process, it typically starts with a question. A good research question is change oriented and is the result of identifying the problem and envisioning success. The question is posed to purposefully disrupt thinking and focus on opportunities for improvement through deeper understanding.

‘We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.’

Albert Einstein

The planning phase of action research considers data collection, interpretation and analysis, as well as theoretical influences. Subsequently, future actions are informed by observations of practice, thinking and reflecting about what was observed as well as gaining insights from other perspectives from our colleagues and theorists, for example.

The cyclic process of action research requires a revised plan, additional data collection and analysis with refined conclusions after which the theory can be adjusted and tested again. A positive outcome of action research is being able to report your findings, initially to key stakeholders and then to the broader service community. Some of the most significant changes to practice within OSHC have been the direct result of educator teams deliberately engaging in action research.



The action research process is made up of four key stages (adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, as cited in Dick, 2000).

There are many data collection methods that are suitable for action research. They can include but are not limited to:

- interviews
- focus groups
- surveys by children, families, educators, online or in hard copy
- narratives/storytelling
- visual methodologies
- observations of practice, and
- critically reflective entries in diaries or journals.

Fundamental to action research is the importance of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) which means accessing the best, research-proven assessments and interventions in our day-to-day service delivery. This requires educators to undertake actions to stay in touch with research literature and use it to inform decision making. A variety of professional literature is helpful to engage with and an educational leader may develop strategies that enable educators to regularly access journal articles, books and other media to deepen their reflection on and understanding of their interest.

There are a number of considerations to make when undertaking action research. In the OSHC environment, educators must be keenly aware of undertaking responsible research with children. If appropriate, children may be engaged as research partners. This can be helpful as children observe with different eyes and ask different questions – sometimes questions that adults may not have even considered. Children also have different concerns and immediate access to a peer culture where adults are outsiders.

Responsible research is guided by the research culture of the organisation and should demonstrate the Principles of Responsible Research conduct, as set out in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018](#). These include: honesty, rigour, transparency, fairness, respect, recognition, accountability and the promotion of responsible research practice.

As the educational leader undertakes action research with the educator team they will be responsible for ensuring that:

- the research involves the management of ethics, and
- participants are informed about the research, their role in the research, the data being gathered, how data will be used and seeks their informed consent to participate. For an OSHC service, that includes the children, families, carers, school and other interested members of the community.

Action research has become a widely recognised approach to improving service quality. Action research has the capacity to professionalise the OSHC sector; enhance the motivation and efficacy of educators; meet the needs of an increasingly complex, diverse and growing sector; and achieve success through meeting the exceeding themes of critical reflection, embedded practice and meaningful engagement which families and/or communities.

Getting practical

There are many different ways that an educational leader can be involved in the promotion of action research in an OSHC service.

Leading action research in OSHC

Educational leaders may take a key role in facilitating an action research project or cycle of inquiry within the service. Step one is to develop a research plan, which is key to the success of the action research project. An action research plan provides a framework to support the research project and should detail:

- who will be involved
- what the service intends to do as well as the timeframes involved
- identified methods for gathering data as well as undertaking data analysis
- ethical considerations taken into account in the plan (for example detailing who will have access to the data, how it will be used, stored and reported).

It is important for educational leaders to consider how they evaluate the success of the action research study. Evaluation may involve critically reflecting on:

- how well the project addressed the problem or issue
- whether there was sufficient data gathered to inform how the problem or issue could be addressed
- the collaboration among participants in the project
- the relationship between the evolving plan and the data and literature
- how the research project contributed to the educational leader's own reflection and development as a leader
- the impact on research participants
- how and when the research project and its impact on practice and continuous improvement was shared or reported to stakeholders.

Focused reflection on the outcomes of the project as well as critical evaluation will help the educational leader and the educator team determine how successful the project was in meeting its objectives and purpose. Action research has the capacity to influence powerful change and many teams that have experienced success with their projects and embed the cycle of undertaking action research in their day to day practice. They view it as a vital part of quality improvement and a proactive way of being able to address problems, issues and challenges as they arise.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- ‘Forrest Out of School Hours Care case study’, *The Educational Leader Resource*, page 53–54
- National Health and Medical Research Council: *The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018* – www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1
- *Guiding School Improvement with Action Research*, by Richard Sagor – www.ascd.org/publications/books/100047/chapters/What-Is-Action-Research%C2%A2.aspx
- AITSL: Action research for professional learning – www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/action-research-for-professional-learning-illustration-of-practice



9. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN LARGE OSHC SERVICES

While there is no definition of what a large outside school hours care (OSHC) service looks like, many OSHC services throughout Australia have more than 100 children attending before and after school and during vacation care sessions. The number of children in an OSHC service will have implications on the strategies you implement as an educational leader, because as the number of children increases the number of educators also increases.

Establishing systems

Having effective systems in place is essential to enhancing service operations through the implementation of leadership strategies, such as distributed leadership. An educational leader, in collaboration with other service leaders will have systems in place that meet the needs of their role, and that of the educators working in a large service. The service will also have established systems that prioritise and promote a shared responsibility for learning, documenting, staffing, safety, interactions and relationship building.

The Educational Leader Resource highlights the importance of establishing effective systems across your service (pg. 46). In this section, you'll find reflective questions about establishing systems. You can use those and the questions below to reflect and build systems for educational leadership in a large OSHC service.



Reflective questions

Reflect on the changing needs of your role as an educational leader when the service increases the number of children in attendance and consider:

- Do your existing systems support the change to staffing and children?
- What systems have to change to continue your role successfully?
- What strategies from a distributed leadership model will you be able to implement?
- When will you review the new systems, and who will participate in the review?
- How can two or more educational leaders at the service work together to succeed in this role?

What can educational leadership in a large OSHC services look like?

There are benefits, challenges and opportunities associated with being an educational leader in a large OSHC service. With the employment of more educators it's important for an educational leader to continue to support educators' understanding of the National Quality Framework (NQF). Consider unpacking the quality areas to support your team's understanding of the unique context and characteristics of a large OSHC service.

The following summaries of quality areas 1, 3 and 4 may be helpful for you as you undertake your role in a larger OSHC service. The educational leader can have a positive influence on developing systems for these quality areas in a large OSHC service.

Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice

Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice is likely the part of the National Quality Standard (NQS) that you will spend most of your time developing systems for in a large OSHC service. This quality area has three standards that focus on the educational program, educational practice, and the assessment and planning for each child's learning and development. In OSHC services, the educational program and pedagogical practice nurtures the development of life skills and complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships from school, at home and in the community. The program supports the engagement of school age children in meaningful leisure and recreation activities and experiences.

In Quality Area 1 educators are asked to adopt an intentional and responsive approach to their pedagogical practice decisions and actions. The educational leader has a role in supporting educators by providing pedagogical direction and guidance. Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development through a program which enhances their learning and development.

Programming and planning expectations for each child can sometimes seem overwhelming for the OSHC educator team working with large multi-aged groups of children.

Consider the following when planning your systems as an educational leader and Quality Area 1:

- the length of each session
- the attendance of children – one session, one day or multiple days
- the attendance of educators
- the different groups and dynamics of children each session
- the large numbers of children using the same space
- the causal employee and their current understanding of the NQS and the approved framework
- the time available to meet and provide guidance on an educators program.

The educational leader will be equally as thoughtful in supporting educators to work collaboratively and effectively as they consider the approved learning framework, make curriculum decisions, gather information about children, and take a planned and reflective approach within a cycle of planning or inquiry.

With support, the educational leader collaborates with educators in designing an educational program that draws on contemporary theory and research. The educational leader supports educators to work with children and families, and use their unique skills and knowledge, to achieve optimal learning and developmental outcomes for children – best practice program planning. Larger teams offer more diversity, adding layers of richness to the program. There are increased opportunities for observations and documentation to be undertaken by a wide range of educators. This enhances collective knowledge, perspectives, and understandings of each child and team input into each child’s learning and development.

Effective educational leaders use critical reflection as a helpful and collaborative tool to engage the team in thinking deeply about theory and research, their skills and knowledge and ultimately their practice. Critical reflection supports OSHC professionals to analyse their actions and practice and challenge their perspectives, thinking and ideas.

Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, can drive quality program planning and implementation. When educational leaders facilitate and guide effective reflection, it has the potential to reveal a mass of ideas from the educator team. Enhancing your team’s skills in and ability to prioritise, plan, and document children’s learning is essential in responding to large numbers of children and educators to ensure the service draws upon relevant, responsive and meaningful practices to inform their work (see additional information in *Section 4: Critical reflection and leadership in the context of OSHC*, and *Section 5: Leading the cycle of planning in school age care*).



Quality Area 3 – Physical environment

Quality Area 3 – physical environment is integral to service quality. The importance of creating physical and social school age care environments that have a positive impact on children’s development, wellbeing and community building is a pedagogical practice identified in *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*.

The standard level concepts for Quality Area 3 refer to ‘design’ and ‘use’. Large numbers of children can increase the complexity of how a physical environment is appropriately designed and used. OSHC services operate in a variety of settings, school halls, purpose built buildings or classrooms. Highly effective communication between OSHC and school leaders helps promote the effective negotiations about the access and use of appropriate spaces for larger numbers of children and staff.

The educational leader works with the educator team to ensure the children’s environment is inclusive, promotes competence and children’s agency and maximises opportunities for each child to engage in quality experiences. The educational leader will collaborate with the educator team to consider the impact of the number of children in the play spaces.

Consider the following when planning your systems as an educational leader and Quality Area 3:

- the level of noise during play and routine practices
- how children independently access resources for play
- the adequacy of the furniture, including age appropriate chairs and tables
- how children independently access their belongings
- the space for educators, including space for meetings and relaxation.

Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements and relationships with children

The educational leader may share his or her knowledge of staffing arrangements with other service leaders to ensure that the organisation of educators across the service supports children’s safety as well as enhances their learning and development. Continuity of educators is important to ensure children and adults have the time to develop responsive, nurturing, trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationships. This, however, can be increasingly complex for large OSHC services, especially if some team members work casual shifts, or move between services. Building genuine connections with each other as well as sometimes hundreds of children and families can be challenging.

Professional standards can be useful points of reflection for educators and educational leaders to guide the development of systems of practice, interactions and relationships as well as informing performance reviews and individual plans that support educator learning and development. As the educational leader, consideration is given to the systems developed and used to engage all members of a large team of employees to effectively engage educators in a meaningful development process, and in applying the different skills and knowledge of each educator.

Consider the following when planning your systems as an educational leader and Quality Area 4:

- How can you contribute to the systems developed to retain staff to provide continuity of care and education to children?
- Who develops the staff roster and what do you know about educators that will allow the organisation of educators to facilitate and respond to children's learning and development?
- What role can you play in educator wellbeing? What systems are in place to maintain a positive wellbeing amongst staff when working in a large OSHC service
- Do team meeting agendas include the standing item of educational leadership?
- How can the service leaders identify and utilise the strengths of educators through specific roles that focus on specific areas of the program? Some educators may be students and have various qualifications. This expertise can be channelled into tailored roles such as sustainability leaders, community engagement leaders or being members of the team that research and develop the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).
- What opportunities exist or could be built to invite staff to lead professional development including workshops on their area of interest such as loose parts play or developing the RAP?



Reflective questions

- How can the role be divided amongst educators to meet the needs of children and educators?
- What aspects of the distributed leadership model would you use to promote the sense of collective responsibility in a large OSHC service?
- What strengths, interests and aspirations does the educator team have? Would they be receptive to a mentoring program, and what could this look like in your service (eg, pairing experienced staff with new staff to share guidance on practices and routines)?
- Have you considered joining a local network of educational leaders? Ask them about the systems they have to streamline their role within a large OSHC service.

There is no one right way or system for undertaking the role of educational leadership in OSHC. When developing successful systems be sure to collaborate with other service leaders and educators about what suits the service. What works for one service may not work for another. Regularly reflect on the responsibilities of those involved in educational leadership and the systems being used to manage the role in a large OSHC service.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA.
- ACECQA. (2019) *The Educational Leader Resource*. Sydney, NSW: ACECQA
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Video: [Perspectives of an Outside School Hours Care educational leader](#). ACECQA video resource



10. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR OSHC EDUCATORS

A key role of an educational leader is to support educators in their everyday work and in their continual quality improvement journey (ACECQA 2019, p.15). The Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Professional Standards for Educators (QCAN 2018) provide OSHC educational leaders with a framework to guide the preparation, support and development of educators.

What are the OSHC Professional Standards for Educators?

OSHC Professional Standards for Educators (the Standards) were developed by Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN) and are based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2011). The Standards – www.oshcprofessionalstandards.org.au – are accessible on the standards website.

The Standards define the work of OSHC educators and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective OSHC provision that will contribute to positive outcomes for children. They present a common understanding and language for discourse between educators, educational leaders, nominated supervisors, governing organisations, professional associations and the public (QCAN, 2018).

The Standards provide a framework to judge competency, assist self-reflection and self-assessment, and inform the development of professional learning goals. The Standards can be used to support performance evaluation, helping to ensure that educators can demonstrate appropriate levels of professional knowledge, practice and engagement. They contribute to the professionalisation of the OSHC sector, and education and care more generally, and aim to raise the status of the profession.

What do the standards articulate?

The Standards articulate what educators are expected to know and be able to do at a continuum of four career stages:

- 1. Foundation**
- 2. Developing**
- 3. Proficient,** and
- 4. Lead.**

The stages reflect the continuum of an educator's developing professional expertise from training and pre-vocational preparation through to exemplary practitioner and a leader in the profession.

The Foundation level acknowledges that many educators do not hold formal qualifications when they begin their OSHC career. This level underpins induction and training and articulates essential knowledge, practice and engagement foundations.

The Developing stage describes educator's progress and complements the formal qualifications that educators may be working towards.

At the Proficient and Lead levels, educators may have completed a relevant qualification.

At the Lead stage, a suitable qualified and experienced educator could take on the role of educational leader.

Links to the National Quality Standard (NQS)

Effective implementation of the Standards supports OSHC services to meet Element 4.2.2 of the NQS: ‘Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.’ The Standards also support NQS Element 7.1.3: ‘Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service’; and NQS Element 7.2.3: ‘Educators, co-ordinators and staff members’ performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development’.

Organisation of the OSHC Professional Standards for Educators

The OSHC Professional Standards for Educators comprise seven standards which outline what educators should know and be able to do. Each of the seven standards are interconnected, interdependent and overlapping. They are grouped into three domains; Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement. The role of the educator in OSHC settings draws on aspects of all three domains. These have been taken directly from the OSHC Professional Standards for Educators (2018).

Domains	Standards	Focus Areas and Descriptors
Professional Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand children and how they develop 2. Know the Approved Learning Framework and how it informs the program and curriculum decision making processes 	Refer to standard at each stage
Professional Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Design and deliver an effective program for all children 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe environments 5. Evaluate, assess and provide relevant feedback on children’s experiences 	Refer to standard at each stage
Professional Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Engage in professional learning 7. Engage professionally with colleagues, families and the community 	Refer to standard at each stage



Educator self-assessment

Educator self-assessment supports educator reflective practice. By considering everyday practice and past experience, educators can build their reflective-practice capacity and inform future actions. A reflective journal can be a practical tool to document self-assessment and reflection. Educational leaders can support educators to implement and improve their self-assessment, reflective skills and documentation. *The Educational Leader Resource* (ACECQA 2019) provides extensive resources on fostering meaningful reflection.

The OSHC Professional Standards for Educators in Practice

While not mandated, the Standards are another resource educational leaders can use to guide the preparation, support and development of educators.

Competency assessment

Educational leaders may be responsible for assessing the competency and overseeing the progress of educators as they develop the knowledge and skills to work effectively in the OSHC setting. The Standards provide a framework to support educational leaders to make an informed assessment of educator competency.

The Standards provide competency descriptors for each professional domain and for each standard. These provide a framework for educator self-assessment, assessment by others, and professional development goal-setting. They can identify:

- the knowledge and skills the educator brings to their role
- the strengths, as well as gaps, in the educator's knowledge and skills
- training and development needs.

Professional development

Following competency assessment, educational leaders can formulate a professional development plan in collaboration with the educator. It is important that the plan identifies what needs to be learned, the best ways to learn it and a timeframe. Importantly, it should be linked to everyday practice. The educator's plan ideally needs to:

- build on current competency and strengths
- address gaps in knowledge and skills
- be tailored to suit the learner
- be mutually agreed.

Methods of workplace professional development and training that may be provided within OSHC include:

- **Orientation/induction** is undertaken upon initial employment and designed to give basic instruction on tasks relevant to their role and to support effective transition into the workplace.
- **Coaching** is a popular means of development, and often includes working one-on-one with the learner to conduct a needs assessment, set major goals, develop an action plan, and support the learner to accomplish the plan. The learner drives these activities and the coach provides continuing feedback and support.
- **Job assignments** are opportunities from which to learn and foster critical thinking and reflection. To cultivate learning, employees write short reports, including an overview of what they did, why they did it, what areas of knowledge and skills were used, how the job might have been done better, and what areas of knowledge and skills would be needed to improve the job.
- **Mentoring** is an opportunity to 'buddy' learners with experienced team members in the workplace who are willing to provide ongoing coaching and mentoring. Mentoring benefits both mentors and mentees. For further information see the following posts on ACECQA's *We Hear You* blog: Mentoring Matters – wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2018/10/08/mentoring-matters – and *New Educator Survival Guide* – wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2017/03/30/new-educator-survival-guide.
- **On-the-job training** helps with developing the specific occupational skills necessary to carry out their job role effectively.
- **Peer-based methods** involves peers sharing their learning by exchanging ongoing feedback, questions, supportive challenges, materials etc. Team meetings and professional learning conversations are examples of this practice.
- **Webinars, podcasts and tutorials** provide learning on specific information, techniques or procedures e.g. a tutorial on food handling and hygiene procedures. These can be accessed by the learner online and at a time that suits their schedule.

Providing professional feedback

The Standards provide a framework for professional feedback, by clarifying the expectations of the educator role. Feedback should be focused, given with empathy and encouragement, and with consideration to the educator's needs and sensitivities. Effective communication skills will support feedback and assist the development of shared understanding. *The Educational Leader Resource* (ACECQA 2019) provides extensive resources on communication and professionalism.

Getting practical

Tips for OSHC educational leaders

Educational leaders have varied and demanding roles within the OSHC environment. Investment in support and professional development of educators and educational leaders can create competent, collaborative and productive teams that achieve service goals. These strategies can support the training and development experiences of educators:

- Familiarise yourself with the OSHC Professional Standards for Educators to enable effective support and guidance of educators throughout all the career stages.
- Refer to *The Educational Leader Resource* (ACECQA 2019) for professional support and guidance.
- Meet with educators regularly to discuss their progress. This reinforces that their professional development is valued and important and offers you the opportunity to encourage educators and give feedback on their professional practice.
- Support educator self-assessment and reflection.
- Ensure identified professional development is consistent with the educator's learning requirements.
- Provide opportunities for educators to practice new skills and apply new learning in the workplace context.
- Reinforce knowledge and skills learnt through professional development opportunities. As the educational leader, you will undertake a mentoring role and offer guidance, support and advice in relation to educator's professional learning. For example, when instructing educators in service practices, it is useful to link these to regulatory requirements and the NQS. Learning is much more effective when the workplace provides opportunities to reinforce or clarify some of the philosophical and legislative expectations of working with children.
- Use team meetings as opportunities for educators to share learning from external training opportunities. This reinforces that the service values training, extends learning to the team and assists all educators keep up to date with current training in the sector. It may also provide an opportunity for more general feedback on training.
- Maintain regular contact with your own mentor or other educational leader colleagues. This professional support may include emails, phone calls, networking and service visits to assist you, as educational leader.

Resources and references to continue your learning

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2011). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Melbourne, VIC: AITSL.
- ACECQA. (2020). *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (September 2020). Sydney, NSW: ACECQA – www.acecqa.gov.au
- ACECQA, Qualifications for Working in OSHC Services– www.acecqa.gov.au/qualifications/requirements/working-in-OSHC-services
- AITSL 2011, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf?sfvrsn=5800f33c_64
- QCAN 2018, Outside School Hours Care Professional Standards for Educators – <https://50b9267b-294a-47a6-804d-06b33f061761.filesusr.com/ugd/5b9443d687268a06394ecb82554d19a7c4e5e9.pdf>
- Australian Government. (2012). Australian Core Skills Framework – www.employment.gov.au/australian-core-skills-framework#:~:text=The%20Australian%20Core%20Skills%20Framework,writing%2C%20oral%20communication%20and%20numeracy.



11. CO-LOCATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

The outside school hours care (OSHC) sector has rapidly expanded within the last decade with Australian families' increasing demand for quality services a priority.

Most services operating on school sites provide families with convenient access to care before, after and during vacation school periods. In supporting families with access to quality services, schools and OSHC providers must negotiate the complexities of shared facilities and co-location.

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, to grant a service approval, the regulatory authority must be satisfied that the approved provider is entitled to occupy the premises.

When a service operates on a school site, the approved provider needs to provide evidence, such as a lease agreement. This evidence indicates the service is entitled to occupy a part of the school premises.

The legal site manager of the school, referred to as the school leader, is responsible for all experiences and events occurring on site. Establishing an agreement about shared facilities and co-location between school and the OSHC service ensures all stakeholders understand their responsibilities.

This agreement should include the days and hours the site and facilities are available for operating an OSHC service. It should also include arrangements for cleaning, maintenance and repairs, securing facilities, processes for communication and resolving issues, and if required, payment of hire fees.

Collaborating with the school

The school and OSHC provider establish a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship once an appropriate agreement regarding the shared use of facilities. Strong partnerships provide the opportunity to enrich learning and optimise outcomes for students, families, teachers and educators.

Strong partnerships can:

- strengthen social capital in the community by building trusting, respectful and sustained relationships
- increase the recognition of collaboration by recognising tasks that would be difficult to accomplish alone
- avoid unnecessary duplication
- ensure the diverse perspectives of children, families and community stakeholders are embedded
- extend opportunities for educators, teachers and staff to learn from, share resources and skills with one another
- ensure efforts are grounded in community realities and relationships.
(Roehlkepartain, 2007)

What does co-location and partnerships with schools involve?

Partnerships between school and OSHC services require strong communication and cooperation and a commitment to shared values. The benefits of a co-location partnership include:

- improved engagement and outcomes of the school and OSHC service in responding to the needs of families and children
- increased collaboration
- embedding knowledge of education and care pedagogies for parents, school staff and the community
- enhanced feelings of belonging within a community for all students.

Partnerships based on effective communication build the foundations of understanding about each other's expectations and attitudes and build on the strength of each other's knowledge.

In genuine partnerships, children, families, schools, communities and educators:

- value each other's knowledge
- appreciate each other's contributions to and roles in children's life
- trust each other
- communicate freely and respectfully with each other
- share insights and perspectives with and about children
- engage in shared decision-making.

(My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, p. 11)

The OSHC service and school should endeavour to discuss their curriculum, processes and practices regularly. Regular communication assists the mitigation of the use of shared spaces, disputes and potential issues.

Along with, sharing practices that support children's transitions between both the OSHC service and the school classroom. Strong communication supports and benefits:

- the development and maintenance of relationships
- open communication
- continuous improvement
- quality outcomes for all children.
- (Provisional Co-location Policy and Process, Department of Education Tasmania, 2019)



Getting practical

The educational leader can support partnerships with the school co-locating with the OSHC service in many ways.

Through an active partnership and information sharing, the educational leader can support children's transitions between school and the service, allowing for consistency and continuity for children.

By being engaged in regular 'check-ins', the educational leader can help create a strong sense of community for the children and families of the service. Regular 'check-ins' can create opportunities to review how the arrangement is working, concerns, and further opportunities to work together effectively.

Services can increase their professional knowledge and their capacity to deal with complex family and community issues and needs (*Co-location and other integration initiatives: Strategic Evaluation*, a summary report, Department of Education Victoria, 2015).

The educational leader can critically reflect on the school's goals and expectations for teaching and learning, adapting them to align with the OSHC service. They should ensure that the program is engaging, meets the school community's needs and reflects both the school and service's philosophy.

For a partnership to be effective, each party must have a clear understanding of the operating context of the other. The following table offers some insight into the different language and terminology used by each sector.

Table 1 – Linking schools and OSHC services

School language	Education and care services language
<p>School Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State or Territory Education Act (for example Education General Provisions Act {EGPA} Queensland) • ACER National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » School reviews » Nine domains » Reviewers 	<p>National Quality Framework (NQF):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Law and Regulations • National Quality Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Assessment and rating » Seven quality areas » Authorised officers – assessors
<p>Teacher</p>	<p>There are no national qualification requirements for OSHC educators. However, there are state and territory specific position titles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » first qualified educator » second and subsequent qualified educator • NT, SA, WA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » qualified educator • QLD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » one year qualified » two year qualified • VIC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » certificate III-level » diploma-level • NSW, TAS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » up to each approved providers to determine qualification requirement and position title
<p>Head of curriculum (HOC)</p>	<p>Educational Leader</p>
<p>Principal</p>	<p>Nominated Supervisor</p>
<p>School</p>	<p>Service</p>
<p>Australian Curriculum</p>	<p>Approved Learning Frameworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (5–12) • Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (0–5)

School language	Education and care services language
Students	Children
Education Departments, Catholic, Independent school agencies	Approved provider – local, state, national and overseas organisations and businesses
Schools operate under the relevant State or Territory Act (such as the EGPA in Queensland)	Service approval – approval for the service to operate

Resources and references to continue your learning

- Australian Government – *My Time, Our Place – Promoting Collaborative Partnerships between School Age Care Services and Schools* – <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/3432>
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2011). *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/mtop_12072019.pdf
- Harms, T., Jacobs, E. V., & White, D. R. (2013). *School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, updated edition (SACERS)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- *Guide to Outside School Hours Care Provision*, Department of Education Victoria (2017). Retrieved from www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/management/oshcprovisionguide.pdf
- *Primary schools as community hubs: A review of the literature*, The Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, (2012). Retrieved from www.communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Primary_Schools_as_Community_Hubs_Literature_Review_Jul_12.pdf
- *Provisional Co-location Policy and Process*, Department of Education Tasmania (2019). Retrieved from <https://publicdocumentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Provisional-Policy-and-process-to-guide-co-location-of-education-and-care-and-Department-of-Education-services.pdf>
- Roehlkepartain, C. C. (2007). *Developing Partnerships for Service-Learning: Starting points for Community-Based Organisations*. Brandeis University: ETR Associates.
- Victoria Department of Education and Training – ‘Co-location and other integration initiatives: Strategic Evaluation – www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/colocation/Co-location%20Services%20Summary.pdf
- Victoria Department of Education and Training – www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/OSHC/Pages/about.aspx#link60