

2019

NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

QUALITY AREA 1

AUSTRALIAN CHILD CARE GUIDE 2019 | OURXPLORE.COM

QUALITY

AREA 1

The educational program and practice is stimulating, engaging and enhances children's learning and development. In services for children over preschool age, the program nurtures the development of life skills and complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships at school, at home and in the community.

Quality Area 1 focuses on ensuring that the educational program and practice of educators are child-centred, stimulating and maximise opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development. It recognises that a quality program that builds on children's individual knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests is likely to have long-term benefits for children and for the broader society.

We have included a series of responses to help services answer questions related to the Xplor platform and how it supports best practice. These responses are just examples and you should consider how Xplor supports your service.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA1		Educational program and practice
1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
1.2	Practice	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.

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The table below shows the sections of the National Law and National Regulations underpinning Quality Area 1 and lists the most relevant element of the NQS associated with each section (S) and regulation (R). Please note that this table serves as a guide only and regulatory authorities have flexibility in how they assign non-compliance with the National Law and National Regulations against the quality areas, standards and elements of the NQS.

National Law and National Regulations		Associated element	Self-assessed status	Actions if non-compliant
S.51(1)(b)	Conditions on service approval (educational and developmental needs of children)	1.1.1	 <input type="checkbox"/> Compliant  <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
S.168	Offence relating to required programs	1.1.1 1.1.2	 <input type="checkbox"/> Compliant  <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.73	Educational program	1.1.1	 <input type="checkbox"/> Compliant  <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program	1.3.1	 <input type="checkbox"/> Compliant  <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.75	Information about educational program to be kept available	1.3.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.76	Information about educational program to be given to parents	1.3.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.274A NSW	Programs for children over preschool age	1.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.289A NT	Programs for children over preschool age	1.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	
R.298A Queensland	Programs for children over preschool age	1.3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant	

Quality Area 1

Identify if the service meets the requirements of Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice.






Standard 1.1: The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.

Concept	Element		Identified practice/evidence from self-assessment	Met	Not Met
Approved learning framework	1.1.1	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p><i>Digital software for use in early learning environments has transformed the way that information about children and programs is generated, documented and distributed. Advantages that are proffered with these types of technologies are that they provide to educators and families increased flexibility, greater engagement, ease of communication and collaborative opportunities. These advantages are intended to enable greater participation by all stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>One of our primary goals when choosing Xplor was to connect and empower the community that uses them. While Xplor has given us new ways of communicating and documenting children's learning and development, it is the polysensory potential of this platform that is the real opportunity it provides to us. Xplor gives us the opportunity that, if enacted well, the prospect of multiple modes of perception and community involvement.</i></p> <p><i>We see Xplor as a type of cyber Piazza. In this online Piazza, the whole community can meet and the occasion for participation is real and multi-layered. You enter the space not as parents, educators or children, but as citizens that are concerned with things that concern children. In this space, this type of online participation is considered an educational strategy. By contributing you are generating an actual experience of unity and inclusion.</i></p>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Child-centred	1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p><i>By using Xplor to document learning we aim to make known the intelligence and thinking processes of children, their ideas, strengths and interests. It reminds us clearly that documentation is not about finding answers but rather about generating questions and proposals.</i></p> <p><i>Through the use of photos and videos as well as visual stories and their accompanying interpretations allow us to communicate to educators, families and children ours and their thinking which gives us an opportunity to generate theory and meaning to form the foundation of the program.</i></p> <p><i>This type of pedagogical documentation offers us the opportunity to become co-constructors of knowledge with children. The power of the photograph or the video and the accompanying narrative is clear.</i></p> <p><i>It invites us to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>What do we want to understand?</i> ▪ <i>What theories can I see in practice?</i> ▪ <i>What do I want to find out more about?</i> 	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Program learning opportunities	1.1.3	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's		 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>

Standard 1.2: Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development.

Concept	Element		Identified practice/evidence from self-assessment	Met	Not Met
Intentional teaching	1.2.1	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>Digital software for use in early learning environments has transformed the way that information about children and programs is generated, documented and distributed. Advantages that are proffered with these types of technologies are that they provide to educators and families increased flexibility, greater engagement, ease of communication and collaborative opportunities. These advantages are intended to enable greater participation by all stakeholders.</p>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Responsive teaching and scaffolding	1.2.2	Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>Our Educators are able to respond to a child’s ideas through the use of technology. This is demonstrated in our stories, where you will see that; one can explore, construct, solve a problem, or simply enjoy shared moments. Educators leave time and take time. They have the responsibility and the right to have the time to reflect and question what is happening and also to explore with the children what shared steps ought to be taken. All this is supported through the use of technology that helps us connect and construct processes of reciprocal awareness and assess the learning taking place in an authentic and respectful way.</p>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
Child directed learning	1.2.3	Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>Xplor supports the diversity of learners due to being open-ended and allowing children to express themselves in multiple ways using multimodal forms of communication.</p> <p>This allows children to be in control of their own learning, encouraging them to be more motivated and interested in actively participating to learn and revisit experiences based on their strengths, interests and needs and engage in self and peer reflection. Therefore, if used correctly this supports the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy as children use higher order thinking skills to ‘create’, ‘analyse’ and ‘evaluate’ their learning (University of South Australia).</p> <p>However, critical issues regarding power relations can arise when educators passively rather than actively include children in the documenting process by always taking control as the onlooker who has children under constant surveillance as the inferior ‘onlooked’ child (Sparrman & Lindgren, 2010). This may cause children to change their typical behaviour if they are aware they’re being recorded making it difficult to capture authentic moments (Baldu, 2010).</p> <p>We spend a lot of time making sure our Educators are not interpreting children’s work without including children’s voice which may lead to misinterpretations (Arthur et al, 2015). This violates the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) which states that all children have an equal right to actively participate and therefore contradicts the aim of using the ‘Xplor app to capture children’s perspectives of their learning.</p> <p>Therefore, we make sure we take on a child-centred approach to documenting by allowing children to actively participate in the process by including their voice either by scribing or recording their conversations.</p> <p>‘Xplor’ is a highly effective documentation tool as children, teachers, and parents can reflect on what actually happened rather than on what educators perceived to have happened to extend children’s learning.</p> <p>This can therefore be used to portray children’s unique individual identities by portraying a biography of their learning over time.</p>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>

Standard 1.3: Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.

Concept	Element		Identified practice/evidence from self-assessment	Met	Not Met
Assessment and planning cycle	1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>Visual documentation of children's work, experiences and activities provide families, educators and children with valuable information about children's learning and development. The use of Xplor particularly, to document children's learning in our services is now well entrenched and our families love it. There can be a lot of value in this. When someone stops to take a photograph of a child or their work they are communicating a powerful message to children: you and what you are doing matters.</p>		
Critical reflection	1.3.2	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>The ability to create stories using the story editor and add 'learning tags' to include philosophy, pedagogical theories and/or theorists allows educators to effectively communicate an in-depth reflection of children's learning which reduces the risk of misconceptions (Xplor, 2017).</p> <p>In conjunction, educators can use the 'reflection tool' to collaborate privately with other educators by reflecting, analysing, and evaluating their practices and children's learning and giving each other informative feedback.</p> <p>Educators can use this information to either repeat, modify or change their approaches to planning and documentation entirely.</p> <p>Therefore, this tool increases teacher collaboration which reduces the likelihood of educators doubling up on stories and instead elaborating and extending on these. It is also easy to see which children's e-portfolios lack entries and include more after discussing children's learning trajectory with other educators (Xplor, 2017).</p> <p>Communication is also increased due to the ability to share notices, reminders, upcoming events, and converse with parents and receive immediate responses strengthening teacher parent partnerships.</p> <p>However, research shows both educators and parents are more inclined to make either affirmative or generalised comments rather than provide specific feedback when large group stories are posted due to concerns of being misinterpreted by others.</p> <p>Therefore, we make sure educators include more stories related to individuals or small groups of children and include related theories, so educator's perspectives of children's learning become visible and encourage more in-depth responses from parents.</p> <p>This encourages shared understandings and builds knowledge of how to support children's learning needs. There is also the risk of parents who do not respond often missing out on opportunities to communicate leading to feelings of exclusion.</p> <p>Therefore, educators should ensure they include photos and videos of all children to ensure families feel valued as well as monitor which parents are not engaging regularly on 'Xplor' and investigate potential barriers to this and ensure they communicate using alternative methods, such as face to face.</p>		
Information for families	1.3.3	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.	<p><i>Example Response:</i></p> <p>By receiving information including photos and videos of their child, families stay connected as they gain insight into what their child is doing and learning on a daily basis, how this links to the centres curriculum and philosophy based on the EYLF, and the progression of children's learning over time.</p> <p>This is vitally important due to the diversity of families including both parents working, families overseas, and single parent families who may not have a lot of time to spend with their child due to an array of commitments though can log into Xplor in between their busy schedules at any time of day.</p> <p>They can add encouraging feedback and comments to show their interest and support which strengthens their child's confidence and encourages them to continue to achieve outcomes to the best of their ability (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009).</p> <p>Parents can use these entries as a springboard to discuss and reflect on what their child did that day and continue activities at home to extend learning as well as add pictures at home to continue learning at the childcare setting (Xplor, 2017).</p>		

Practices that meet or exceed the expectations of the NQS

Quality Area 1: Service strengths

Example Response

Results indicate that 'Xplor' has many strengths, one of which includes capturing children's perspectives and promoting individual identity due to being open-ended and the ability to include multimodal forms of communication to cater for the diverse needs of each child, such as recorded conversations. 'Xplor' also supports communication and strengthens relationships between parents, educators and children due to educators increasing the frequency and quality of entries by including links to theories and pedagogy based on the EYLF as well as the ability to collaborate instantaneously. This makes it easier for parents and other educators to articulate and extend by engaging in deep reflection and analysis together.

In addition, entries can be posted and responded at any time of the day keeping families from all over the world in touch with the process of children's learning. Furthermore, children can continue their account when they enter school to enable lifelong documentation of their learning.

Another major strength is although extra time and money is needed to initially install and learn how to use the app, in the long-term time and money will be saved due to easy navigation and access to tools, and no longer needing to print hard copies. This gives extra time to interact with children and money to spend on other learning needs.

We still emphasise to educators that they must not fall into the trap of thinking that just because they are using an effective documenting tool that documentation of children's learning will automatically be of high quality. If educators are not aware of what strategies support the use of 'Xplor' then this can lead to weaknesses of its usage. This includes the risk of parents not using the app due to privacy concerns if not informed about the secure privacy settings. It also includes surveillance issues where educators passively rather than actively include children which risks misinterpreting children's perspectives (Sparrman & Lindgren, 2010).

Communication issues can also arise if educators use incorrect methods of expressing information including the use of generalised rather than specific feedback as this prevents in depth reflection which jeopardises children's learning and the development of strong relationships with children, families and other educators. Therefore, we have implemented the following strategies for the 'Xplor' to effectively support children's learning:

- Role model a positive attitude to using this technology to influence parents, children and other educators in using this app (Parnell & Bartlett, 2012).
- Take on a child centred approach and allow easy access of this technology to encouraging children to actively participate in documenting their own learning by including their voice, such as through recorded conversations to avoid engaging in teacher surveillance and misinterpretations of children's perspectives (DEEWR, 2009).
- Continuously observing and listening to children's interactions throughout the day, and asking open-ended questions and further questioning their responses to gain a thorough understanding of their views (Bartlett & Parnell, 2012)
- Create more entries including individual and small groups of children rather than large groups to encourage more in-depth responses instead of generalised comments from parents to gain a thorough understanding of each child to strengthen communication and relationships with families as reinforced in the EYLF (2009).
- Providing specific feedback including specific encouraging feedback to acknowledge children's efforts, such as "I love the way you added detail to your drawing of house by including windows and a door" rather than providing limited feedback, such as "Great work!" so children know exactly what the educator is referring to and encourages them to continue to do this (Mac Naughton & Williams, 2009). Specific feedback also refers to providing ways to improve skills (Carlson, Hemmings, Wurf & Reupert, 2012), such as "Instead of tipping the bucket of sand over as soon as its full, try patting it down first to make the sand stick firmer together when you are making a sandcastle."
- Include photos and videos of all children to ensure everyone feels included, valued and a sense of belonging to the centre (Fleet et al, 2011). If parents do not respond regularly to entries than investigate potential barriers and use other methods of communication including face to face interactions (Hooker, 2017).
- Spend extra time and money on the initial setup of the platform by engaging in collaboration with other educators and listen to online tutorials and workshops to become confident in using the 'Xplor'. In the long-term time is saved to spend interacting with the children and money saved on printing costs of hardcopy portfolios can be utilised in other areas to support children's learning.

Summary

In conclusion, educators have an important role of showcasing children's thoughts and perspectives through high quality pedagogical documentation processes which not only reflect the outcomes but all aspects of the Early Years Learning Framework (2009). And due to the increase use of digital portfolios in today's society, the current investigation has illustrated that there are many strengths in using the high-quality platform called 'Xplor' to document children's learning in childcare settings.

This includes saving on time and cost in the long term due to no longer needing to print hard copies which supports the EYLF by promoting environmental sustainability (DEEWR, 2009). This also includes supporting children in projecting their thoughts and strengthening their identity by being open-ended and offering multimodal forms of communicating to cater for diverse needs. It also strengthens communication and relationships between educators, children and their families. This is due to easy access, navigation and usage at any time of day in any country. It also includes the provision of educator built templates to link children's learning to theories, pedagogies and philosophies that reflect the EYLF when creating entries and engaging in instantaneous and increased collaboration which results in higher quality reflections and a deeper understanding of the child's current and future learning trajectory.

Of particular significance is the ability to continue using this tool when commencing school supporting children's lifelong learning. However, if educators are unaware of effective strategies to implement when using the platform then this creates weaknesses that can negatively impact on planning, documenting and assessing children's learning including teacher surveillance issues (Sparman & Lindgren, 2010), privacy concerns and communication issues.

Therefore, it is essential for educators to apply the above recommended strategies when using the 'Xplor' platform to ensure they provide highly quality documentation of the process of children's learning which reflects all aspects of the EYLF (2009).



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