

Best Start
Best Life

Kindergarten Learning Progressions





Acknowledgement of Country

The department proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

'Respecting Connections' (2023) by Nakia Cadd, a Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Bunitj, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung woman who grew up in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne.

'When thinking about acknowledging Country, it's about respecting those many different connections; to the land, sky, waters, animals, people and stories.'

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Learning Progressions to improve child outcomes

To support the launch of the Victorian Teaching Excellence Approach and ongoing EYALT implementation activities, the Department of Education are proposing to publish the learning progressions that underpin the EYALT and relevant supporting material to guide early childhood teachers on how to use them in daily assessment practices.

Purpose

Children enter educational settings with unique prior knowledge, life experiences and pace of learning. The role of a teacher in supporting the individual learning needs of each child is rewarding but also challenging at times.

Learning Progressions are a way of helping early childhood teachers to better understand children's unique strengths and abilities, so that teaching strategies can be tailored to their needs.

This resource is central to the Teaching Excellence Approach rolling out across Victoria in support of increased hours for three and four-year-old children.

The purpose of this document is to introduce what Learning Progressions are and how they can be used in a variety of ways to great effect. It allows early childhood teachers to make the most of the precious time they have with children at crucial stages of their learning and development.

Learning Progressions form a toolset that has been carefully and thoughtfully developed by some of Australia's best early childhood education academics and practitioners at the University of

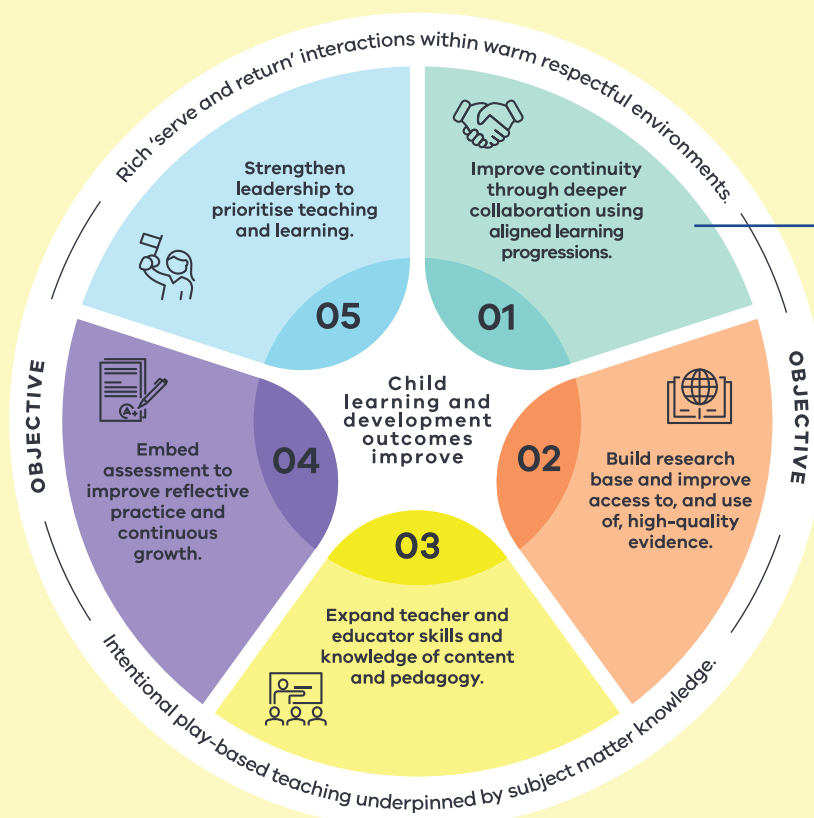
Melbourne. It reflects the best available evidence of child development stages and how children progress through them.

The Learning Progressions are intended as a value-add to the essential knowledge and lived experience that early childhood teachers already have. It's not mandatory, and its use is entirely optional for early childhood teachers.

The Department of Education promotes best practice teaching and provides early childhood teachers with practical tools and supports to deliver high quality educational programs. Learning Progressions are an important addition to the suite of supports freely available to every early childhood education teacher, leader and practitioner in Victoria.

To learn more about practical examples of the Learning Progression toolset in practice, or to access any of the professional learning supports available as part of the Teaching Excellence Approach, visit the Early Childhood Hub at www.EarlyChildhoodHub.vic.gov.au

Fig.1: Five Priority Areas of the Teaching Excellence Approach



The Learning Progressions toolset helps us to achieve Priority Area 1 of the Teaching Excellence Approach: *Improve continuity through deeper collaboration using aligned learning progressions.*

What are Learning Progressions?

Learning Progressions indicate a child's capabilities across a range of different learning domains. This is based on a developmental model of learning that is familiar to many teachers, educators and leaders.

This way of thinking about child learning is codified within Learning Progressions, which are described in terms of the emerging knowledge, understandings, skills and capabilities that early childhood teachers can recognise in children as they learn and develop.

The Learning Progressions describe a child's 'Zone of Proximal Development' along increasing levels of learning to support early childhood teachers'

daily assessment practices. The Zone of Proximal Development describes the point at which a child is ready to learn. Influential early 20th century child psychologist and teacher Lev Vygotsky described this as follows:

*"The Zone of Proximal Development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation . . . These functions could be termed the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than the 'fruits' of development."*¹ (p. 86)



The immense value of Learning Progressions

Learning Progressions are a useful way to observe a child's current capabilities and tailor teaching strategies that will best support the child's further development.

Every teacher observation is a potential data point of where a child may be excelling and may benefit from positive reinforcement – or a development area which may benefit from targeted and intentional teaching. Learning Progressions enable the build-up of data points over time. This provides a rich understanding of children and how their learning can be best supported.

Through continued use, the Learning Progressions enable a teacher to track children's progress and identify sticking points. Where a challenge can be clearly identified – and to an extent *quantified* – then it can be confidently addressed in a way that is purposeful and impactful for the child.

Research shows that using evidence and assessment helps early childhood teachers to build a strong understanding of children's learning. In doing so, early childhood teachers are more confident in their

professional practice, are able to express agency and are more willing to positively participate in decision-making at their workplace.

Learning Progressions also allow the tracking of progress across home, kindergarten and school in a more coherent and consistent way than has ever been the case before. This is a powerful method to create continuity of child learning over time and across different settings.

There is immense value for Learning Progressions to support children's transitions between three and four-year-old kindergarten, between the early childhood setting and school, and between different early childhood settings when families need to move locations or providers.

Using Learning Progressions as an assessment helps to guide early childhood teachers to be more intentional in their practice and understand how best to reflect and adjust their teaching strategies to improve children's outcomes – and ultimately their life trajectories.



The Learning Progressions structure

The Learning Progressions found within this document are structured around what we call Learning Domains, Nutshell Statements and VEYLDF Statements.

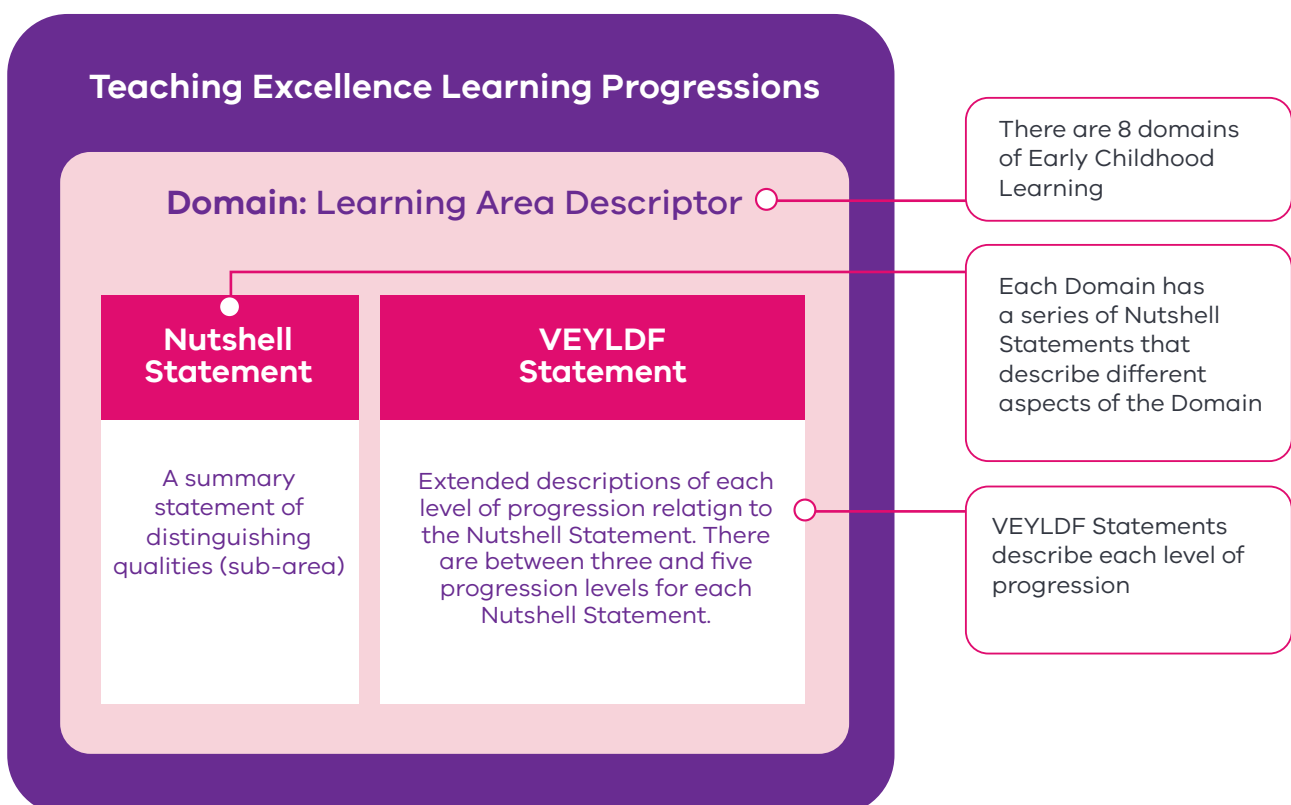
'VEYLDF' refers to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, a foundational document for how kindergarten programs are designed and delivered in Victoria. It is available on the Department of Education website or via the new Early Childhood Hub (www.EarlyChildhoodHub.vic.gov.au).

Understanding the structure and definitions can help with navigating and applying the Learning Progressions effectively. There are eight Learning Domains (and two alternative Domains) that represent distinct areas of learning. Each of the eight Learning Domains support early childhood teachers' intentional teaching practice within the Early Years Planning Cycle (Figure 3). Children can be located along a progression of increasing proficiency, and with the right support, can be helped by early childhood teachers to progress in their learning through all Learning Domains.

The Kindergarten Learning Progressions are made up of:

- **Nutshell statements:** summary statements capturing the distinguishing qualities identified in each level of a Learning Progression. They have been drafted in collaboration with early childhood teachers to describe the key qualitative shifts in learning and development that can be observed as children progress from one level to another.
- **VEYLDF Statements:** extended descriptions of each level of the Learning Progression. They provide a broader description of the nutshell statements, describing the levels that a child progresses through linked to VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes. The VEYLDF Statement includes more detail that early childhood teachers can use to inform their observations and resulting teaching and program planning. The progression levels are called *VEYLDF Statements* due to their inclusion in the forthcoming update of the *Victorian Early Years Development Framework*.

Fig.2: Structure of the Teaching Excellence Learning



Alignment to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) acknowledges that early childhood professionals choose assessment instruments and techniques to create a holistic picture of each child's knowledge, understandings, skills and capabilities.

The Learning Progressions, alongside the Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (EYALT), have been designed to support a systematic and collaborative

approach to assessment. Table 1 below shows how the Learning Progression Domains map to the Learning and Development Outcomes of VEYLDF.

VEYLDF remains the overarching Framework that guides early years teaching in Victoria. The next version of VEYLDF will be released in 2025, building on the ground-breaking first edition published in 2009.

Table 1: Learning Progression Domains and how they map to the VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes

Learning Progression Domains	Description	VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes
Identity and community – social 	Children communicating their wants and needs, playing alongside each other, and developing relationships	COMMUNITY - Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing – emotions 	Children feeling good about themselves and expressing their emotions during play	WELLBEING - Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning dispositions ¹ 	How children might show curiosity, ask questions, or show perseverance	LEARNING - Children are confident and involved learners
Communication – interactions ² 	Eye contact, gestures, and attention	COMMUNICATION - Children are effective communicators
Communication – symbols and texts 	Children recognising signs or text	COMMUNICATION - Children are effective communicators
Learning and communication – numeracy 	Numbers and maths concepts	LEARNING - Children are confident and involved learners
Wellbeing – movement 	Children's motor skill development	WELLBEING - Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning and identity – thinking skills 	Children being curious and inquiring about their world	IDENTITY - Children have a strong sense of identity

¹ An alternative *Learning dispositions* Domain is available for children with autism (*Learning dispositions – ASD*)

² An alternative *Communication – interactions* Domain is available for children who communicate non-verbally (*Communication – non verbal*)

How to use Learning Progressions

Learning Progressions provide important evidence-based reference points that help with observing and recording children's progress over time.

When used alongside the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the illustrative maps the learning progressions give teams a shared language for understanding and discussing observations of individual children and the support to bring greater depth to your observations, assessment and programming.

Learning Progressions can serve as a guide for planning learning activities that meet children at their current level and support them towards the next level. They provide more granularity of observable progress than currently exists within the five VEYLDF Outcomes or their associated Illustrative Maps. Each layer outlined in Figure 3 presents different levels of granularity to support learning observations, as follows:

- The five VEYLDF Outcomes are high-level and easy to understand. Each of them has key components of learning that support general observation of learning needs.

- Illustrative Maps provide examples of evidence that demonstrate when students develop particular skills and capabilities in each of the VEYLDF Outcomes. These are useful in making more informed curriculum decisions and to help with planning experiences that advance children's learning.
- Learning Progressions provide the most granularity of observable progress in children's learning. These can be used to track change over time and form the evidence points for the Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool (EYALT).

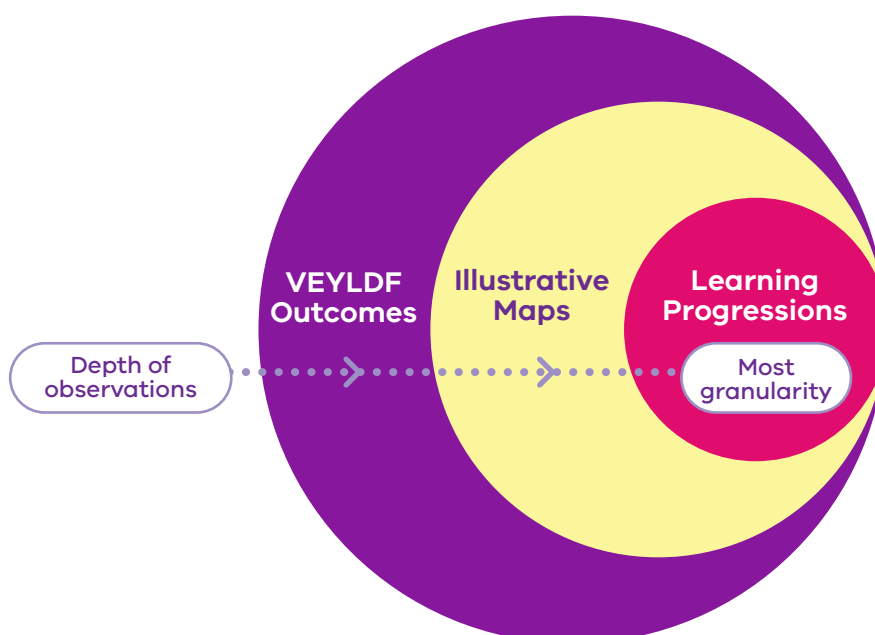
There are some more specific ways to use Learning Progressions that support child development. Each involves different levels of training, support and breadth of adoption within the specific setting.

These are:

1. To support the inclusion of evidence into the Early Years Planning Cycle (specific use)
2. As part of the Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool (optimal use)

Speak to the educational leader in your particular setting about these options to see if they are right for your workplace. Otherwise, there is still value in adopting them for general use.

Fig.3: Deepening observations of learning



1. Using Learning Progressions to support the Early Years Planning Cycle (specific use)

The Learning Progressions support early childhood teachers as they plan for children’s learning using the Early Years Planning Cycle (Fig. 3).

The Learning Progressions support the Early Years Planning Cycle by:

- Supporting early childhood teachers to make meaningful, ongoing observations of children in collaboration with educators, organisational and service leaders as well as other early childhood professionals.
- Encouraging early childhood teachers and educators to analyse the observations they make and informing that analysis with a child’s documented strengths and abilities aligned to the VEYLDF and the Victorian Curriculum F-10.
- Providing information about the *Zone of Proximal Development* to be used in conjunction with early childhood teachers’ judgement to support planning for children.
- Providing a sequential view of a child’s development in a domain alongside the illustrative maps, which offer a broader set of examples of how learning develops.
- Enabling reflection by tracking and monitoring learning progress over time to inform individual learning plans and program planning.

Fig.4: The Early Years Planning Cycle

Collect information	Question and analyse	Plan	Act and do	Reflect and review
Initiation: The educator briefly records evidence of a child (or group of children) engaged in an activity that demonstrates child learning. Continuation: The educator briefly records evidence of a child (or group of children) engaged in the planned learning activity that further demonstrates child learning and the cycle continues.	The educator analyses the observation to clarify what the child knows already and what the child may be ready to learn next. The educator then links this information to VEYLDF Outcome Evidence Markets or the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards.	The educator identifies learning aims that are linked to VEYLDF evidence markers or the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Achievement Standards, and writes an outline of what they will provide to consolidate or extend the child’s learning and progress along their individual learning trajectory. This includes specific vocabulary the educator will model and scaffold as well as some open-ended questions that encourage the child (children) to explain or demonstrate their thinking.	The educator sets up and delivers the learning activity, paying attention to the extent to which the child engages with the aims of the learning plan.	With the learning aims in mind, the educator evaluates what the child learnt and considers whether to repeat, refine or extend the plan. Alternatively, the educator may choose to keep the learning aims to apply them to other playful activities.

2. Using the Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool to assess children's Learning Progressions (optimal use)

The Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (EYALT) is an online assessment tool created with Victorian early childhood teachers that has the Learning Progressions at its heart. The EYALT contains 8 modules that mirror the 8 Learning Progression Domains. As described above, these are aligned with the VEYLDF and the [first version of the Victorian Curriculum](#) F-10.

Whether a new or experienced professional, EYALT is a valuable tool for everyone in the early childhood sector. It helps by:

- Documenting interactions to understand each child better.
- Showing how children progress in their learning over time.
- Integrating seamlessly with daily teaching practices.
- Improving observations and assessments for intentional teaching.
- Generating evidence for informed discussions with Foundation teachers.
- Supporting continuity of learning during transitions to school.

How to get involved in using the Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool (EYALT)

The department's assessment-focused and EYALT-driven professional learning program builds on previous success and includes tailored sessions to meet service needs. All registered kindergarten services are welcome to use EYALT. Most sessions are online to make them easier to attend.

Highlights include:

- **Introductory Sessions:** Designed for early childhood teachers, educators and early childhood services new to EYALT, these sessions provide foundational knowledge and practical guidance.
- **Q&A Drop-In Sessions:** Flexible, live support sessions for early childhood teachers, educators and leaders needing real-time guidance on EYALT implementation.

Contact details:

Visit us to find out more:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/early-years-assessment-and-learning-tool>

Drop us a note to contact the team:

early.years.assessment@education.vic.gov.au

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