

Communication - interactions

Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool Fact Sheet

- ✓ This fact sheet supports educators' understanding of the Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (the Tool). It highlights assessment as an everyday practice using a case study. It builds on the ideas explored in the [Assessment and the planning cycle practice videos](#).
- ✓ The Tool helps teachers and educators track and understand children's learning and development in a dynamic and consistent way.
- ✓ It supports educators working with the [Early Years Planning Cycle](#) and their assessment of children's learning. The Tool guides observations of play-based learning and generates Learning Reports from educator observation.
- ✓ Analysis of the information educators collect (e.g., via observations) informs their teaching practice (Plan, Act, Reflect). Over time, educators observe, document, and assess each child's progress against the five [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework \(VEYLDF\) Learning Outcomes](#).
- ✓ The 8 Tool modules align with the VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes *and* the Assessment for Learning and Development Practice Principle of the VEYLDF.
- ✓ The Tool's suggested teaching strategies have been designed to support children's learning trajectories and can be adapted to your service's resources and context.

Tool module: Communication - interactions and the VEYLDF

The Tool fosters strength-based assessment approaches. Through everyday observations in play-based learning environments, educators reflect on what the child can typically do with consideration to the child's cultural context and experiences. The Tool generates a Learning Report that allows educators to consider what the child is ready to learn next and offers targeted learning experiences to scaffold their learning (Plan/Act).

The Tool module *Communication - interactions* aligns with VEYLDF Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators. Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes. They are learning to engage in reciprocal communication. Children typically respond both verbally and non-verbally to things they see, hear, touch, feel and taste. Children attend and give cues, for example nodding or shaking their head or utterances like “yes/yeah” or “mm mm/no”, to show they are listening / do or do not understand. Perhaps they are interacting purposefully with other children to discuss the parameters of a game or assign and communicate roles: moving around on all fours, “I’m the dog / woof woof”. Children might initiate interactions with their teachers “Can we do ‘Going on a Bear Hunt?’” or pull the educator along and sing “We’re going on a bear hunt ...”.

The five key components of VEYLDF Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators are:

- ✓ Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.
- ✓ Children engage with a range of texts and get meaning from these texts.
- ✓ Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.
- ✓ Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work.
- ✓ Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

For this module, *Communication – interactions*, educators observe and reflect on the child's learning progression of communication skills, to develop their use and understanding of social expectations about communication. For each module, educators respond to a series of questions which draw on their existing knowledge of the child. When completed, the Tool gives teachers and educators a Learning Report which provides them with a picture of the child's strengths and interests related to the particular module.

Case study

Makshi participates in a four-year-old kindergarten, in regional Victoria. Following a bush kinder session where she delighted in rolling down a large hill, Makshi took part in a group time in which her and her peers shared their experiences of rolling down the hill and how it felt. Makshi was encouraged to share her thoughts and demonstrate to the group how she was able to roll 'straight'. Her teacher took note of the different ways Makshi was able to communicate her intentions to her peers, including using descriptive words and drawing their attention to her movements to add emphasis.

Collect information

Based on multiple observations, collected over time and with added perspectives from her parents, other educators, and early years professionals, Makshi's teacher completes the *Communication - interactions* module. They note that Makshi can:

- use language from play, music, and art to share and project meaning
- interact with others to explore ideas, clarify, and challenge thinking, negotiate, and share new understandings
- communicate purposefully, building on the language/literacies of her home and family.

Question / Analyse

For the Learning Report in this module, the 'nutshell' and Learning Outcome Statement provides a summary of Makshi's learning progression and describes how she can:

- recognise social rules of communication
- use language and engage in symbolic, imaginative play
- create roles and share stories.

Makshi's educators know that her ability to communicate with her teachers and peers is an asset, and that their role in being attentive and encouraging children to communicate in varied ways is vital. The report also suggests intentional teaching and learning strategies to advance Makshi's learning based on where she is currently at, for example:

- provide extended processing time for the child to respond to communication from others. Be patient but expect a response from the child. Listen to/observe the child when they respond
- use questioning to extend the child's comments and observations. Prompt the child to provide background information and expand upon statements
- take the child on visits to community facilities (e.g., shopping centres, libraries) to stimulate conversation and build confidence and exposure of how communication varies in social contexts.

Makshi's teacher reflects on the information and suggested teaching and learning strategies the report provides. This report guides their consideration, together with colleagues, of the most suitable resources and possible integrated teaching and learning experiences (see below) to advance Makshi's learning. Makshi's educators plan accordingly.



FIGURE 4: INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

Plan

Following a review of the Tool's suggested teaching strategies, Makshi's educators add extensions to the educational program.

Makshi's educators plan for her to:

- participate in self-expression experiences, such as dance, art, sculpture, drama, movement, music and imaginative play
- use digital technologies and multimedia resources to communicate, play and learn
- create and display her learning in ways that are meaningful to her.

Act / Do

Resources include a language-rich learning environment. Educators capitalise on Makshi's recognition of the social aspects of communication by using greeting routines and interactions that deliberately incorporate languages used by her peers. Makshi's educators model the use of different languages of the children by responding in the language the child greets them in. Interactions where she shares her knowledge will be used to extend her thinking into what the word might 'look like'. The pedagogical strategy of repeating children's thoughts back to them or the group gives space and time for further thinking and encourages group collaboration and interaction.

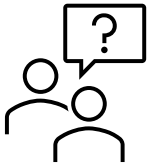


Early Years Planning Cycle (EYPC)

Reflect / Review

The plan for Makshi guides reflection and review. Makshi's educators share their observations of Makshi's language and communication skills and set goals that aim to advance her learning, in collaboration with her family. To broaden their understanding of assessing children's communicative competence, Makshi's educators agree to do some reading on communication development in the early years and reconvene at an agreed upon time to share their insights and any new strategies that they become aware of that can support a range of communication goals.

Communication – interactions: reflective questions



- How is children's learning assessed in your service and how is the information interpreted?
- How are observations made and recorded in the day-to-day (routine, play, transitions, child collaboration)?
- How do you and your colleagues talk with families about encouraging literacy and learning at home?
- What resources, intentional teaching practices (interactions/experiences) and environments might support consideration of the *Communication - interactions* module?

References

Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool

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

Assessment of Children as Effective Communicators: Literature Review (2018)

<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/ey-assessment/Pages/index.aspx>

VCAA Illustrative Maps

<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/Pages/Index.aspx?Redirect=1>