Learning and identity - thinking skills

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: Learning and identity - thinking skills and the VEYLDF

The Tool fosters strength-based assessment approaches. Through everyday observations in play-based learning environments, educators reflect on what a 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 a child is ready to learn next and offers targeted learning experiences to scaffold their learning (Plan/Act). This module, *Learning and identity - thinking skills,* aligns with VEYLDF Outcomes:

Outcome 1 - Children develop a strong sense of identity	Outcome 4 - Children are confident and involved learners
✓ Children feel safe, secure and supported.	✓ Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.
✓ Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.	✓ Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating.
✓ Children develop knowledge and confident self-identities.	✓ Children transfer and adapt what they have learnt from one context to another.
✓ Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.	✓ Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials.
✓ Educators describe the learning progression of strategies such as trial and error, evaluating outcomes, categorising, initiating activities and making choices	

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For the *Learning and identity – thinking skills* module, educators observe and reflect on the child's learning progression of skills to support social interaction, social responsibility, and their capacity to engage in a range of social situations. 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

Cleo attends four-year-old kindergarten on the north-eastern outskirts of Melbourne. Her kinder has a large outdoor learning environment and makes use of a local park adjoining the service for bush kinder sessions. Cleo loves to learn and play outside. Her educators note her enthusiasm for working together with her peers to solve problems, and how she is able to confidently verbalise her numeracy skills in a small group. On this occasion, with some scaffolding from her educator to build her 1:1 correspondence skill, Cleo helps the group count how many sticks are being placed in a basket.

Collect information

Based on multiple observations, collected over time and with added perspectives from her parents, other educators, and early years professionals, Cleo's educator completes the *Learning and identity - thinking skills* module. They note that she can:

- explain her choices and employ ways to navigate challenging activities

- make predictions about her environment

- use strategies to navigate challenging activities.

Question / Analyse

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

- can make generalisations about her daily activities and environment

- carries out multi step tasks

- may use representation to organise concepts.

The report suggests intentional teaching strategies to advance Cleo's learning based on where she is currently at, such as:

- help the child recognise and recall prior knowledge by explicitly connecting past experiences and content to new experiences and, where possible, identify connections to the child's interests and everyday life when introducing new strategies, skills and content (e.g., use reflection journals to show links between learning experiences)
- provide explicit instruction of how to perform an activity or learning experience using simple and concrete language. Model and demonstrate the steps and processes by using think aloud strategies to show the child how to complete a task or solve a problem
- provide the child with the opportunity to direct and lead learning experiences and modify the environment to establish independent thinking and creativity.

Cleo's educator 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 Cleo's learning. Cleo's educators plan accordingly.

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GUIDED PLAY AND LEARNING

ADULT-LED LEARNING

CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY AND LEARNING

FIGURE 4: INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

Plan

Following a review of the Tool's suggested teaching strategies, Cleo's educators add extensions to the educational program. They plan for Cleo to:

- make predictions about what will happen in small group and individual learning experiences

- reflect on her own thinking to consider how she came to a conclusion

- create a representation of the 'steps' to follow to successfully count different quantities of items she is interested in

Act / Do

Resources include photos of different quantities of commonly found materials in the learning environment. Educators will explicitly model how to use 1:1 correspondence to count quantities, and demonstrate different ways to represent the total quantity, such as through holding up the corresponding number of fingers, drawing the number, or representing the total using stones. They will pose questions to promote problem solving and reflection. The language of instructions and steps (at the beginning, first, second, next, after, before, last, at the end) will be used intentionally to help Cleo reflect on how (sequencing) she collects materials. In doing so her educators provide Cleo with the opportunity to direct and lead learning experiences for other children, supporting her own and her peers thinking and creativity, including 'how to' count and represent quantity in different ways.


Early Years Planning Cycle (EYPC)

Reflect / Review

The plan for Cleo guides reflection and review. Cleo's educators draw on expertise beyond the team to gain clear and shared understandings and to inform new directions. As a team, they reflect on the role of the educator in being intentional in creating opportunities for learning for Cleo, including how it is important to know when to step in and demonstrate how to accomplish a task, and to know when to hold back and let Cleo use her existing knowledge to solve problems. Following this learning experience, Cleo's educators review and evaluate their practice to inform ongoing improvement, including how to use technology, such as a camera, to continue to advance Cleo's thinking skills through encouraging her to capture evidence of her learning.

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Learning and identity - thinking skills: reflective questions
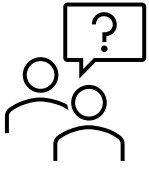
- How is children's learning assessed in your service and how is the information interpreted?
- How are observations made and recorded in the day to day (routine, play, transitions, child collaboration)?
- In what ways do you and your colleagues support children to resource their own learning through connecting with people, places, technologies, and natural materials?
- What resources, intentional teaching practices (interactions/experiences), and environments might support consideration of the *Learning and identity - thinking skills* module?

References

Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool

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

Early Years Planning Cycle Resource for the VEYLDF

https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/EarlyYearsPlanningCycleResource.aspx

VEYLDF Illustrative Maps (Learning, Identity)

https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/veyldf/veyldf-illustrative-maps/Pages/Index.aspx