



Routines: Extraordinary learning in everyday opportunities

Early childhood professionals and families who engage respectfully and responsively with children from birth in everyday routines and experiences promote children's confidence and empowerment. This includes encouraging children to initiate and lead their own learning, and teaching them how to engage effectively with others - VEYLDF, p11

Effective implementation of two years of funded kindergarten is enhanced when educators engage with the **Practice Principles of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)**:

- Reflective practice
- Partnerships with families
- High expectations for every child
- Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- Equity and diversity
- Assessment for learning and development
- Integrated teaching and learning approaches
- Partnerships with professionals.

It is recommended that educators refer to the **VEYLDF** and the Practice Guides for further suggestions and ideas about continuous improvement.

Routines offer powerful opportunities for connection, engagement and development. They also support children to learn new skills in safe and familiar settings. While often mischaracterised as “mundane”, the recurring nature of routines builds a child's self-confidence. This recurrence of activity develops and embeds knowledge, skills, and behaviours across the learning outcomes.

Arrivals, packing up, mealtimes, rest periods, toileting, managing personal hygiene and transitioning from one part of the day to another, are all examples of routines rich in learning possibilities. For example, when a child says goodbye to their caregiver and manages their own belongings, they are learning resilience and thinking skills. Or when a child starts to recognise when they need to go to the toilet, they are learning about self regulation and self-help skills.

Why it matters

When routines are planned for and understood as important learning opportunities, they become an integral part of effective educational programs.

More specifically, routines supported by intentionality and responsiveness offer children opportunities to:

- extend thinking and problem-solving skills
- develop language skills and build vocabulary
- build close and respectful relationships
- build wellbeing and a sense of belonging
- think through cause and effect
- learn sequencing processes and higher order thinking skills
- increase independence and autonomy
- build connectedness and a strong sense of identity.



Practical tips to build effective routines

Teachers and educators can strengthen their approach to routines by considering the following actions:

- Talk with families about how their children currently participate in routines and everyday processes such as resting, eating, toileting, self-help and managing their belongings at home. Ask families about how their children are progressing in these routines, and to identify which areas may need more support.
- Incorporate this information and what you know about children's development to plan for routines that extend learning and development. It might help to include a section in the program plan that identifies how children's learning in routines will be supported by educators. Extend this by systematically planning for different routines that build children's skills.
- Use intentional teaching strategies to support children to understand how to manage each routine; for example, teaching children what to do at drop-off times, how to wash their hands or how to apply sunscreen. This will not only support children to manage routines more effectively but assist them to feel a stronger sense of confidence and agency, develop positive social skills and provide opportunities for enhanced thinking skills.
- Support children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by using bilingual educators or family members to communicate to families about how educators enhance learning in routines.

- Talk to allied health professionals or support staff to see how best to modify routines to support children with additional needs.

Questions for reflective discussion:

The VEYLDF Practice Principle **Reflective Practice** invites educators to stop, think, challenge and change their practices.

Use the following questions to support discussion with your colleagues.

- What are your shared understandings of the benefits of routines for children's learning in early childhood education?
- How do you currently plan for children's learning within existing routines?
- How do you plan for and assess the range of learning opportunities in routines?
- Can these decisions form part of your Early Years Planning Cycle?
- How will you communicate to families about the teaching and learning opportunities that routines provide?
- What process will you use to assess what children can do and understand while they are participating in routines?
- How might you change your current approaches to maximise the learning and development outcomes that routines provide?

Explaining the importance of routines to families

Sharing positive messages with families about how learning is supported enhances outcomes for children. The following key messages might help your service explain how routines provide rich learning opportunities. These can be amended and enhanced by using specific practice examples and including images that bring these ideas to life.

- Participating in routines support children to learn and grow.
- Everyday actions such as dressing, washing hands and getting ready for the day are rich opportunities to support your child's learning and development.
- Routines build self-confidence, curiosity, social skills, self-control, communication skills and more.
- Routines create manageable expectations that allow children to build emotional resilience, such as saying goodbye to parents or carers each morning at drop-off.

References and further reading

Involving children in decision-making
https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-04/QA1_SupportingAgencyInvolvingChildreninDecisionMaking.pdf

Routines: Opportunities for learning and connecting
<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/routines-opportunities-learning-connecting/>

Creating Routines for Love and Learning
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/223-creating-routines-for-love-and-learning>

Early Years Wellbeing Practice Guide
<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/earlyyears/EYWellbeingPracticeGuide.pdf>



