

# VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

FOR ALL  
CHILDREN  
FROM BIRTH TO  
EIGHT YEARS



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department of Education and Training (Victoria) and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the land and waters now known as Victoria.

We acknowledge the Victorian Aboriginal Elders and recognise their central place as knowledge holders and teachers across early years learning communities.

We honour this Acknowledgement throughout the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. We recognise and respect Aboriginal cultures and their unique place in Victoria's past, present and future. Learning about Aboriginal cultures and valuing the place of Aboriginal people is essential to understanding and implementing the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, based on the principles of equity and human rights.

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We respectfully sought and were given approval for Acknowledgement of Country by Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy, Senior Elder of the Wurundjeri people.

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# THE FRAMEWORK: VISION AND PURPOSE

## PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) adopts a comprehensive approach to children's learning and development.

The VEYLDF recognises health as a crucial enabler for learning and development from birth.

The VEYLDF recognises children's wellbeing from birth as both a prerequisite for and an outcome of learning. Supportive relationships and active skill building with adults in their family and community are central to children's wellbeing.

The VEYLDF upholds the image of the child as a rights holder and a competent learner with capacities to learn from birth.

The VEYLDF sets out outcomes and practices to guide early childhood professionals<sup>1</sup> in their work with all families and their young children from birth.

Supporting children to progress toward these outcomes, in conjunction with their families, is the core of the VEYLDF.

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<sup>1</sup> The term early childhood professionals in this document includes, but is not limited to, maternal and child health nurses, all early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood education and care settings (educators), school teachers, family support workers, preschool field officers, inclusion support facilitators, student support service officers, primary school nurses, primary welfare officers, early childhood intervention workers, play therapists, health professionals and teachers working in hospitals, and education officers in cultural organisations.

## WHY BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS?

Research over the past few decades has revealed how the human brain is biologically primed for learning from birth. The early childhood period of children's lives has a profound impact on their learning and development for the long term. From birth to eight years, children's developing brains undergo rapid change. This is when children have the greatest opportunities to develop neural pathways for learning and are also most vulnerable to negative experiences. Research underscores the imperative for comprehensive and integrated systems that support children's learning and development, health and wellbeing in partnership with families. Emphasis is placed on continuity of learning for young children as they move between various settings in the early years, including home, early childhood services and school. An informed understanding of the science of early learning and development guides adults on what children need to thrive and the systems that best support this.

## BIRTH TO THREE YEARS

Research also demonstrates the importance of the first three years of life in shaping learning and development. From birth, early experiences and relationships influence children's long term outcomes and life chances. This includes the development of executive functioning and the capacity to experience, regulate and express emotion, to form close, secure and satisfying relationships and to explore, discover and learn about themselves and the world around them (Institute of Medicine, 2015; AIHW, 2015).

This is important foundational knowledge for all early childhood professionals to understand and apply in their work with families and children across birth to eight years.

The vision and purpose of the VEYLDF is to guide early childhood professionals in a collective effort with families toward the achievement of the nationally agreed Early Years Learning Outcomes (Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009) where children:

- have a strong sense of identity
- are connected with and contribute to their world
- have a strong sense of wellbeing
- are confident and involved learners
- are effective communicators.

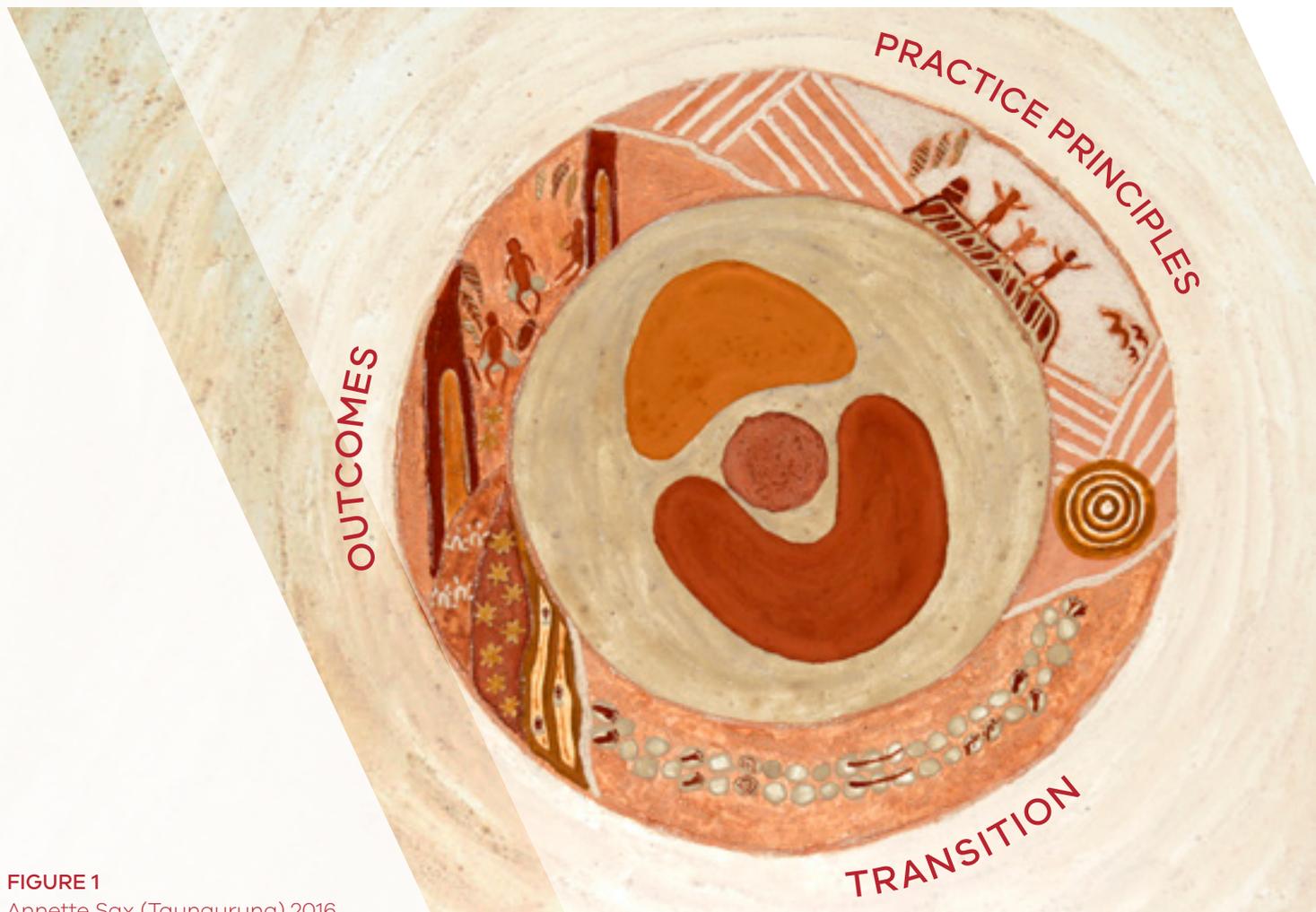
The VEYLDF describes each of these Outcomes for children from birth to eight years, linking the learning outcomes from the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia to the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Illustrative maps (**Attachment 1**) are provided as examples to support continuity of learning. The Outcomes provide a shared language for all early childhood professionals and families to use when planning for children's learning and development.

The VEYLDF identifies eight Practice Principles for Learning and Development, which describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to facilitate learning and development. The Practice Principles are based on the pedagogy of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and evidence about the best ways to support children's learning, development and wellbeing.

The VEYLDF emphasises the importance of supporting children's and families' transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

The following image developed by Annette Sax (Taungurung) (**Figure 1**) depicts the three elements of the VEYLDF: the Practice Principles, the Outcomes, and Transitions and continuity for children and families.

The child is at the centre surrounded by family, kin and early childhood professionals who support children's learning and development. A detailed story description by Dr Sue Lopez Atkinson (Yorta Yorta) of the symbols to accompany this artwork is included on **Page 38** of this document.



**FIGURE 1**  
Annette Sax (Taungurung) 2016

## A FRAMEWORK FOR ALL CHILDREN IN VICTORIA

The VEYLDF guides early childhood professionals to work together with families in support of their children, embracing and responding to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community and diverse approaches to child rearing.

In particular, the VEYLDF:

- recognises and respects Aboriginal cultures and their unique place in the heritage and future of Victoria. Learning about and valuing the place of Aboriginal people will enhance all Victorian children's sense of place in our community
- celebrates the wealth of learning and experience that is available within local communities
- acknowledges that every child will take a unique path toward achieving the five Outcomes, and that all children will require different levels of support, some requiring significantly more than others
- draws upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- seeks to recognise all children as rights holders and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationship with others. These rights, expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), are:
  - ◇ the right to life and development
  - ◇ the right to be heard
  - ◇ the right to non-discrimination
  - ◇ the right for the best interests of the child to be upheld.

These principles are consistent with contemporary early childhood research, and are embedded within the practices espoused in this Framework.

The VEYLDF draws upon the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2016, and the Australian Human Rights Commission publication: *Supporting Young Children's Rights Statement of Intent (2015-2018)*.

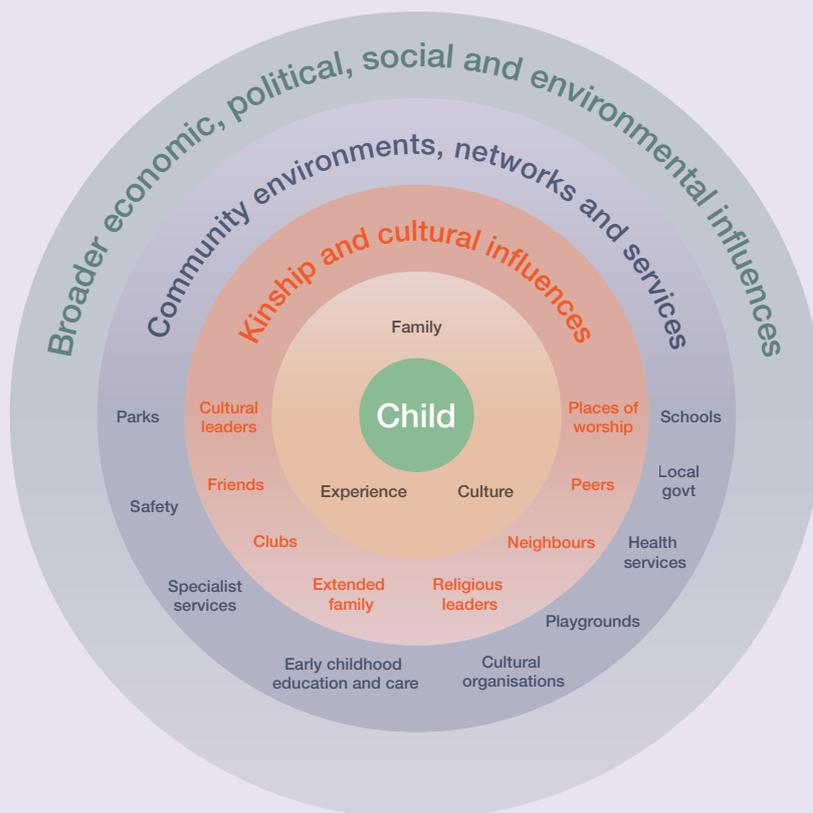
In this way the VEYLDF:

- is part of an integrated set of reforms aimed at supporting young children's learning and development
- sets a cohesive inclusion agenda and provides information about each Outcome, including how the Outcomes relate to the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 in schools
- includes Practice Principles to guide evidence-based practices in the early years.

All children influence and are affected by the environments that surround them. **The Ecological Model** underpinning this Framework acknowledges the life of each child within a social, environmental, political and economic context (see **Figure 2**). This model illustrates the strong network of community, services and programs that support children’s learning and development.

Each child at the centre of the Ecological Model is unique, active, and engaged in their own learning and development within their local context, shaped by their family, culture and experience.

- Families and kinship members have primary influence on their children’s learning and development. They provide children with the relationships, opportunities and experiences that shape each child’s sense of belonging, being and becoming
- Each adult around the child learns, leads, supports and actively invests in the child’s success. Each professional who engages with a child and their family has a part to play
- Local community, cultural events, spaces and their accessibility, reinforce a sense of belonging and wellbeing for a child and their family
- The broad interrelated system and policy settings reflect a vision for children’s learning and development through the five Outcomes.



**FIGURE 2: ECOLOGICAL MODEL** (adapted from Bronfenbrenner 1979)

*Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities. This includes their relationships with people, places and things and the actions and responses of others. Identity is not fixed. It is shaped by experiences. When children have positive experiences they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging. Relationships are the foundations for the construction of identity – ‘who I am’, ‘how I belong’ and ‘what is my influence?’*

(Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia p.20)

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Children and families in Victoria have access to a range of services. Maternal and child health nurses and other health professionals work with families throughout the early years of each child's life. Families are encouraged to access a range of early childhood services, including playgroups, early childhood education and care, outside school hours care, and kindergarten programs, as well as sporting, community education and cultural organisations. Cultural organisations include libraries, museums, botanic gardens, galleries and zoos. All these services provide a wide range of experiences that enhance children's learning and development.

Targeted and intensive services provide additional support for children and families. These include child and family services, supported playgroups, early start kindergarten, and a range of community, primary and specialist health services.

Children's learning and development pathways are integrated, cumulative and subject to change over time. Throughout the first eight years of children's lives, early childhood professionals collect important information about their learning and development. Families and professionals should access and share this information in order to build a complete picture of the child.

The unique attributes of each child, be they cultural, behavioural, physical, intellectual, linguistic, socio-emotional, and the child's own perspectives and voice, must be taken into account when assessing their learning and development. This information assists professionals, with families, to determine the appropriate evidence base to guide and revise programs serving the family and child. Early childhood professionals learn about the family's priorities for their child. They understand the child's attachment, attention, engagement, social interactions, physical health, disability, conceptual understanding, language and communication. They are well placed to further children's learning and development. For example, when teachers in primary school classrooms know what a child's learning and development life pattern has been before they start school, they are well placed to continue to scaffold the child's learning.

## USING THE VEYLDF

The VEYLDF provides a common language to describe young children's learning, and common principles to guide practice. It complements the range of discipline-specific resources that support early childhood professionals working with children and families at **Appendix 2** (online). An outline of the professional learning resources developed since 2010 to support early childhood professionals implementing the VEYLDF is provided in **Appendix 3** (online).

The VEYLDF is also supported by eight Practice Principle Evidence Papers and eight Practice Principle Guides developed in partnership with early childhood professionals. These resources provide detailed practice examples, case studies and guidance about how the Practice Principles can be used to support children's learning and development.

# PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

When children, within their families and local community, are provided with opportunities, experiences and encouragement, their learning and development are positively supported.

The Practice Principles:

- promote personal and collective acknowledgement of each child's identity, culture, and spirit<sup>2</sup>
- support professionals to act in the best interests of children
- guide early childhood professionals as they respond sensitively and positively to each child.

A key role of each early childhood professional is to build children's confidence, sense of wellbeing and security, and their motivation to engage actively in learning with others.

The Practice Principles are based on contemporary international evidence about the best ways to support children's learning and development. They are interrelated and designed to inform each other. The Practice Principles were developed in the context of:

- the pedagogy of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2013)
- the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles (AITSL, 2014).

The eight interrelated Practice Principles are:

- 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Spirit refers to human exploration of being and knowing, a sense of awe and wonder, a search for purpose and meaning within a range of human experiences.

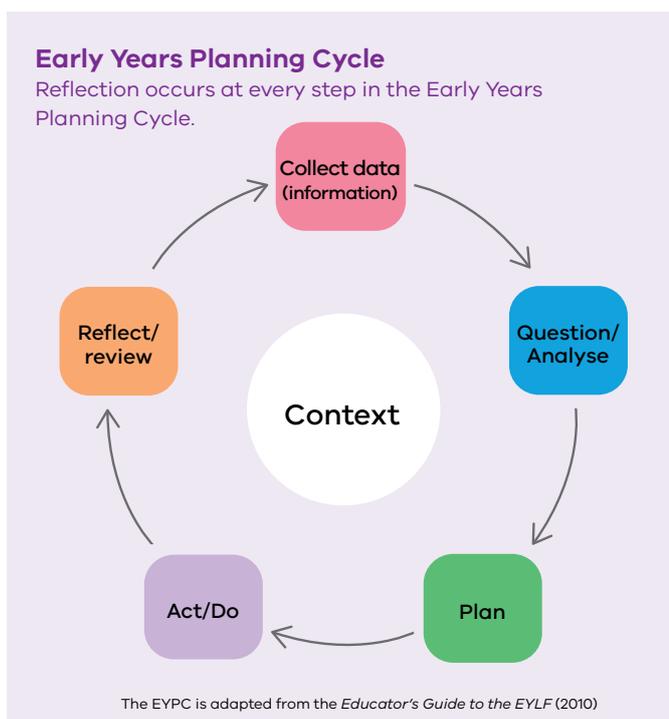


## PRACTICE PRINCIPLES - STORY DESCRIPTION

- Bunjil the Eagle and Waa the Crow represent Aboriginal culture and **partnerships with families**.
- The water hole symbolises **reflective practice**.
- The gum leaves with their different patterns and colours represent **diversity**.
- The stones underneath the leaves represent **equity**. They reflect the additional support put in place in order for all children to achieve.
- The child and adults standing on 'Ochre mountain' symbolise the **high/equitable expectations** we hold for children and adults.
- The family standing on and looking out from 'Ochre mountain' reflects **assessment for learning and development**. Such assessments draw on children's and families' perspectives, knowledge, experiences and expectations.
- The child and adult figures also represent **partnerships with professionals**.
- The land symbol as mother earth represents the basis for **respectful relationships and responsive engagement**.
- The symbols for land, water and people signify **holistic and integrated** approaches based on connections to Clan and Country.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflecting on and critically evaluating practice is a core part of all early childhood professionals' work. It is at the heart of maintaining a learning culture in a service, setting or network and is linked with continuous improvement.



**FIGURE 3: EARLY YEARS PLANNING CYCLE (EYPC)**

**Figure 3** outlines the process early childhood professionals use in partnership with children, families, kinship members and other professionals to question and analyse, act and reflect on evidence they have collected. This strengthens the decisions they make about what is important for children and families within their communities.

Applying the early years planning cycle can increase early childhood professionals' awareness of bias and inequities and support them to uphold the rights of all children to become successful learners. This process may validate existing practices or challenge and drive improvements to less effective practices. It can help individuals and teams to identify the 'next steps' in improvement. Positive aspects of practice and skills can be identified, transferred or extended to improve other contexts.

Professional reflection is facilitated when leaders and mentors actively use their roles to collaborate with other professionals. Effective leadership promotes a culture of excellence and embeds reflective practices within the learning community's everyday processes.

A positive culture with respect for others and a collective purpose is likely to advance the agreed outcomes for children's learning and development. Such a culture will support the identification of and access to professional learning and development resources necessary to improve professional skills and practices.

Individually and collectively, early childhood professionals' practices are more effective within a strong culture of professional inquiry.

Effective practice is strengthened when early childhood professionals:

- gather information, including the views and perspectives of each child, and use it to inform, review and enrich decision-making
- draw on expertise beyond the team to gain clear and shared understandings and to inform new directions
- reflect with children and families as collaborators to create more inclusive environments to advance each child's learning and development
- collaborate with professionals in other disciplines to provide, receive and consider multiple perspectives, encouraging every person's contribution
- use sound evidence to inform planning for children's progress in learning and development
- apply evidence-based practices to advance children's learning and development
- embrace professional learning and skill development that aligns with priorities for setting, service or network improvement
- review and evaluate to inform ongoing improvement
- challenge and change some practices to incorporate new understandings into practice.

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Children learn most in their early years from those adults with whom they have the closest relationships. Families are the primary influence on children's learning and development. Families have a long-standing relationship with and unique perspective on their child. This includes valuable information about their child's strengths, abilities, interests and challenges. Partnerships between early childhood professionals and families have not always been the norm and may not be an expectation of families. This requires professionals to persist in establishing and strengthening partnerships. This may include partnerships with extended family members.

Every partnership will be unique, just as each family is unique with different values and priorities. Early childhood professionals work in partnership with all families within communities to build links between home and other settings a child attends. This provides greater consistency and complementarity for the child.

Some families may find it challenging to engage with early childhood professionals because of their own experiences, for example their language, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds, health or disability related issues. This requires early childhood professionals to use multiple ways to communicate with families, to negotiate and overcome barriers to equity and engagement.

Some families have additional pressures on them. For example, they might experience significant adversity and hardship, family violence, trauma or loss. Regardless of circumstances, it is in the child's best interests for there to be effective, sustained, collaborative partnerships between families and all professionals.

Early childhood professionals:

- show respect in their relationships with families, adopting an open, non-judgemental and honest approach that is responsive to a family's situation
- understand that consensus with families is not always possible or desirable
- create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to experiences that enhance children's learning and development
- listen to each family's understanding, priorities and perspectives about their child with genuine interest to inform shared decision-making and promote each child's learning and development
- actively engage families and children in planning for ongoing learning and development in the service, at home and in the local community
- establish partnerships where information sharing supports families' confidence, identifies what families do well, and recognises the family's critical importance in their child's life.



## HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR EVERY CHILD

High expectations and encouragement are closely linked with children's agency and sense of capability. Children are capable of making choices and decisions from birth. High expectations by professionals and families means being open to possibilities about children's capabilities and avoiding being locked in to ideas about what children are capable of at a certain age or stage. This expectation of success is a powerful motivator for children, promoting resilience and willingness to work hard, regulating behaviour and establishing goals and aspirations for the future. High expectations act as an important protective factor in achieving better outcomes for all children including those who encounter more risk and fewer protective factors within their everyday lives. Building on each child's strengths, and having high expectations for success can help early childhood professionals to reach a unity of purpose around each child and family.

All children have a right to respectful treatment and the inclusion of their perspectives in decision making. Children have a right to participate in decisions that affect them. This requires professionals to provide opportunities and challenges that afford children the space, time, voice, audience and capacity to make a difference in their environment. Children may show ingenuity, creativity and skills that were previously unnoticed. Children construct their own understandings and co-construct understandings with both adults and children, contribute to the learning of others, and initiate and lead their own learning.

Early childhood professionals:

- commit to having high expectations for every child's learning and development
- show sensitivity to the messages they convey about the child's and family's unique abilities
- notice and actively avoid the negative effects of low expectations, prejudice and low levels of attention to any child's learning and development
- value children's strengths and differences and communicate high expectations to them
- ensure that every child experiences success and is motivated to accept new challenges through which to learn and grow
- recognise that every child learns from birth, but some children require different opportunities, spaces and specific supports, in order to learn effectively and thrive
- work with all families, in particular those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage, to promote the importance of having high expectations for their children
- expect and ensure that children express their views and contribute to decisions that affect them, including children who are not able to communicate with words.



## RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIVE ENGAGEMENT

From birth, warm and respectful relationships with familiar adults build and strengthen secure attachments that are fundamental to children's learning and development. All adults are attuned to subtle communication and cues from birth. These relationships nurture, regulate and provide protective factors to support children's wellbeing, resilience and learning capabilities. Protective factors provide a secure base and act as a buffer to help children feel safe and confident enough to try new things and learn new skills and concepts.

The image of the child as a competent learner from birth drives professionals to provide a safe and stimulating environment, and encourage children to expand their capacities and deepen their knowledge and understandings of the world.

Relationships are deeply connected to thinking and learning. Children require support to learn about negotiation, collaboration, problem solving, conflict resolution and listening to each others' perspectives.

Adults' positive engagements with children promote emotional security, children's sense of belonging, cultural and conceptual understandings and language and communication. Positive, respectful engagement also teaches children how to form strong bonds and friendships with others.

Respectful relationships and responsive engagement apply to relationships with both families and children. All aspects of practice and programs should actively encourage children to develop respectful relationships with others. 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.

Early childhood professionals:

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- demonstrate sensitivity and initiate warm, trusting and reciprocal relationships with children and their families
- support families' choices and decision making
- ensure that children experience safe and stimulating learning environments
- help children to establish secure attachments and develop self-regulation
- develop learning programs that are responsive to each child and build on their culture, strengths, interests and knowledge
- support sustained shared thinking
- listen to, hear and take into account the views and feelings of each child
- recognise when a child learns something significant and apply this knowledge to strengthen learning relationships
- recognise and deepen their understandings about other people and how values and beliefs influence their own world view
- demonstrate respect for and understanding of the views of other professionals and families when communicating and interacting across cultures.

## EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Children's identity and their family and cultural histories shape their learning and development. Children feel welcome and learn well when professionals respect and acknowledge their unique identity. Equitable opportunities for children promote their learning and development outcomes. All children have the capacity to succeed, regardless of their circumstances and abilities.

Values and attitudes, understandings of community and individual, and ways of communicating and behaving, all impact on children's sense of belonging and acceptance. When children experience acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, their sense of identity becomes stronger.

Inclusion is the active response by early childhood professionals to understand all children's and families' experiences and children's individual capabilities. It is important to recognise and nurture each child's sense of belonging to their family, community and early years settings.

Early childhood professionals:

- promote cultural awareness in all children, including greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being
- nurture children's evolving capacity to learn from birth, regardless of circumstance or ability
- support all children to develop a sense of place, identity and a connection to the land and the natural world
- engage in sustained shared conversations with children to explore equity and diversity, to promote each child's sense of identity
- ensure that the interests, abilities and culture of every child and their family are understood and valued
- ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and opportunities to demonstrate their learning
- maximise opportunities for all children to do well and learn from others, including opportunities to experience diversity and difference in ways that nurture positive attitudes, and care and respect for others
- identify and implement the type and level of support or intervention that is required to demonstrate and improve children's learning and development
- recognise multilingualism as an asset and support children to maintain their first language, learn English as an additional language, and learn languages other than English
- are committed to equity and avoid practices that directly or indirectly contribute to gender inequality, prejudice and discrimination.



## ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of children's knowledge, understandings, skills and capabilities is an essential ingredient of planning for and promoting new learning and development. Assessment is designed to discover what children know, understand, and can do. Assessment may be based on how children move and regulate themselves, what they make, write, draw, say and can do, and what their family and professionals report about them. All children benefit when assessment reflects a whole-child approach that may include their health and wellbeing, reveals their strengths, and shows what might next be learnt.

Early childhood professionals choose assessment instruments and techniques to create a holistic picture of each child's knowledge, understandings, skills and capabilities. They are thoughtful, deliberate and purposeful in the way they use this information to discuss with families and shape their responses to children.

Early childhood professionals are clear about what they want children to learn and why, and how best to bring about that learning. They value communication with families and what they learn from them. This includes developing an understanding of each child's home learning environment and the health and wellbeing of the family. Family knowledge and understanding about each child's learning and development is taken into account as part of determining important next steps to support and extend the child. A systematic and collaborative approach to assessment over time and to the review and decision-making about 'what next' for a child's program, is crucial.

Self-assessment can be a key motivator for each child to continue along a pathway toward new challenges and further success, especially if they are encouraged and supported in this practice.

Children can be observed to intuitively assess their capabilities or achievement of tasks during informal learning opportunities, and repeated attempts to succeed at something new. These encounters also provide adults with opportunities to encourage further exploration by checking in with children and highlighting effective strategies that children adopt and/or behaviours that they demonstrate.

The Early Years Planning Cycle (EYPC; see **Figure 3, p. 8**) outlines the process that early childhood professionals use, in partnership with families and other professionals, to collect, analyse, plan, act, and reflect on evidence of learning and development. Questioning and analysis informs planning and practice decisions so that what is planned has meaning and is worth children knowing and doing.

Early childhood professionals assess children in ways that:

- are authentic and responsive to how all children can best demonstrate their learning and development
- are receptive to and include children's views of their own learning
- include information from a wide range of sources to help them assess and plan effectively
- reveal each child's specific strengths and capabilities and any gaps in achievement that may benefit from additional early intervention
- include the perspectives, knowledge, experiences and expectations of families
- provide families with information and ideas to support the child's learning at home and in other services
- value the culturally specific knowledge about children and their identity, wellbeing, learning and development that is embedded in their communities
- are transparent, giving all adults close to the child access to best 'next steps' in promoting a child's learning and development.

## INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

Play is central to the concept of integrated teaching and learning approaches. Play is essential to stimulate and integrate a wide range of children's intellectual, physical, social and creative abilities. Effective early childhood practices use integrated teaching and learning approaches to support sustained and shared interactions with children. Through play and other opportunities children learn to make sense of and construct ideas about the social and natural world – the people, places, objects and experiences they encounter every day.

Learning occurs in many different contexts and social environments when children watch others, talk with others and participate in routines and everyday experiences. Children also learn on their own and this learning can be stimulated and extended by the involvement of responsive adults. An integrated teaching and learning approach is an active process founded on learning relationships with children. This involves attunement to children, active engagement (by and with children), sustained shared thinking and conversations, and intentional teaching. This approach recognises the centrality of respectful and responsive relationships to children's learning.

Combined or integrated child-directed play and learning, guided play and learning, and adult-led learning are effective in advancing children's knowledge. Integrated teaching and learning approaches involve adults drawing on and moving between the three approaches in an interweaving way (pictorial representation in **Figure 4**).

Early childhood professionals use integrated approaches to build on children's skills and interests, using real life situations that may introduce something totally new to make learning engaging and relevant.

From birth, sustained shared conversations include gestures, vocalisations, expressions or actions and adults listen carefully and respond using back and forth conversation patterns.

Leaders across the early years have significant roles to play in the integration of effective teaching and learning approaches. The active guidance and support of reflective leaders strengthens intentional practice to improve outcomes for children and families.



**Adult-led learning** occurs when adults introduce an experience or an idea, concept or topic for exploration and direct the learning, giving instructions, setting rules, asking questions and providing structure. Children have some control and input when adults lead the learning. It involves making judgements about what is worth children knowing, and promoting worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills. Adult-led learning encompasses those play experiences and other opportunities that are deliberate and planned by the adult as a response to their knowledge of the child.

**Child-directed play and learning** is an exploratory process that occurs when children lead their learning through exploring, imagining, experimenting, investigating and being creative in ways that they control. The adult's role may be to observe what the child knows and understands based on what they make, write, draw, say and do.

**Guided play and learning** occurs when adults are involved in children's play and learning, following children's interests and responding to spontaneous learning opportunities as they arise.

Early childhood professionals use integrated teaching and learning approaches to:

- encourage all children from birth to explore, solve problems, communicate, think, create and construct ideas and understandings
- create environments that provide children with socially mediated learning opportunities with a range of adults and peers
- promote each child's capacity for establishing friendships and encourage children to learn from and with each other
- share strategies with families and other adults to support learning in the home and other settings
- make decisions about what concepts to introduce to children and when, what is important for them to know and understand, and how to go about building on children's existing knowledge
- use intentional teaching strategies that are always purposeful and may be pre-planned or spontaneous, to support achievement of well considered and identified goals
- reflect carefully on whether, when and how to intervene in children's learning, making purposeful and deliberate choices about when to observe rather than participate
- teach children explicit subject matter (e.g. mathematical, literary, musical, scientific, artistic) and associated skills to deepen and extend their knowledge, understanding and values
- create physical and social environments that expose children to learning experiences and physical activity, both indoors and outdoors in the natural world.



FIGURE 4: INTEGRATED TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH PROFESSIONALS

Early childhood professionals working with young children have diverse disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training and experience. A culture of inquiry and challenge builds robust collaboration and continuous improvement. Effective partnerships with other professionals require leadership, common goals and communication across disciplines and roles to build a sense of shared endeavour.

Early childhood professionals develop and refine their expertise, respect their colleagues, care for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, and draw on the expertise of peers. They work in partnership to improve the quality of children's learning experiences and advance children's learning and development.

All leaders including those in early childhood education and care services, health services, family support services and schools have a part to play in developing collaborative partnerships. Interdisciplinary practice with a range of early childhood professionals can help to strengthen integrated and consistent support for families as they raise their children. This includes appropriate referrals and diagnosis so that all children experience focused, specific and holistic contributions toward their learning and development.

Early childhood professionals work in partnership to:

- research, share information and plan together to ensure holistic approaches to children's learning and development
- respect each others' practice, skills and expertise
- collate and use the evidence of children's prior and current learning and development to build continuity in learning and development
- continue to learn and deepen their expertise in order to best support children's learning and development
- acknowledge the significance of transitions in early childhood services and schools, and work in partnership to ensure that families and children have an active role in transition processes
- work to improve the continuity of practice between settings, including the daily transitions for children and their families
- foster engagement in early years learning communities, where individuals mentor, coach and learn from each other
- develop and promote collaborative partnerships in early years networks
- provide accountable leadership for learning and development outcomes and support research-based practice in learning networks.



# EARLY YEARS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The VEYLDF identifies five Outcomes for young children from birth<sup>3</sup> and extends these to include all Victorian children from birth to eight years:

- Children have a strong sense of identity (**identity**)
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world (**community**)
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing (**wellbeing**)
- Children are confident and involved learners (**learning**)
- Children are effective communicators (**communication**).

The VEYLDF provides early childhood professionals with evidence-based concepts to advance learning and development. From birth, children learn and demonstrate knowledge, skills and understandings in different ways and at different points in time. The rate of children's individual progress is not always the same, nor is progress always easy or straightforward. For some children and families, maintaining and improving learning and development involves considerable struggle and much perseverance. Therefore, different kinds of support and engagement are required.

The descriptions of the five Outcomes included in this section are neither exhaustive, nor exclusive. The five Outcomes provide a common language to support collaborative approaches between professionals and with children and families to build continuity across early years settings and programs for children from birth to eight years.

The illustrative maps between each of the five Outcomes and the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 (**Attachment 1**) strengthen continuity of learning across the early years. This resource also provides examples of children's learning and development from birth to eight years for review and discussion between early childhood professionals and with families.

The illustrative maps:

- can be used to help make visible to families and other professionals the priorities that are being pursued at any point in the child's learning and development from birth to eight years
- enable professionals to see and describe how foundational learning and development from birth supports and connects to a continuum of learning and teaching from the five learning and development Outcomes to the Victorian Curriculum F-10 in the early years of school
- support professionals and families to see the learning of children from birth as described in the five VEYLDF Outcomes and to build on and extend that learning
- assist teachers in the early years of school to design experiences and learning opportunities that build on and extend children's knowledge and capabilities.



## OUTCOMES - STORY DESCRIPTION

- Gum leaves as bush medicine symbolise connection to **wellbeing**.
- The yam daisy represents the survival of a strong Aboriginal **identity**. The yam daisy was central to the diet of Aboriginal Victorians. It was almost wiped out by colonisation but has survived.
- The family sitting under the scar trees with message stick and coolamon symbolises **communication**.
- The family seated on the land also symbolises the child **learning** through their connection to and involvement with **community**.

<sup>3</sup> As agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in July 2009.

## **OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY**

Identity is unique to each individual, and defines who people are, what shapes their interests and how they come to view the people and events around them. Some aspects of identity are permanent and others change throughout life. The foundational sense of who we are is profoundly important. Identity is aligned with belonging, the sense of feeling included and secure in the social settings (family, community, early childhood services and schools) that are part of everyday life.

From birth, relationships are at the foundation of children's construction of their identity: Who am I? Where do I fit in? How do others see me and relate to me? These questions are at the core of identity formation. In order to form a strong sense of self, children need to build secure relationships first within families and then with caring, attentive adults and other children in the places they spend time.

Secure attachments are critical for all children from birth and link to positive mental health outcomes. Attachment means having attentive, affectionate, consistent, available, attuned adults as a source of comfort and reassurance. When children from birth have positive experiences of relationship and place, they can develop a strong sense of security, identity and belonging. They can construct a positive image of themselves, and behave as secure, significant, respected individuals. As children build self-identity and a sense of belonging they reach out and communicate the need for comfort, assistance and companionship. As they show interest in others and experience being part of a group, they participate with others in play and other learning opportunities and develop friendships.

The acquisition and maintenance of first or home languages has a significant and continuing role in the construction of identity. This is supported when early childhood professionals respect children's cultures and languages. In Victoria the rich array of languages and cultures enable many opportunities for valuing and strengthening multilingual capabilities, respecting cultural diversity, supporting common values and building social cohesion.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connections to country, including through learning on country in the natural world, support identity. Family and community are valuable sources of cultural knowledge and skills for all early childhood professionals in developing cultural competence.

Children who have a strong sense of identity feel comfortable within local, social and cultural practices important in their lives. Children feel safe and secure and experience close attachment and kinship with those close to them – parents, grandparents, family groups, caregivers and friends. Children are supported to act with self-confidence and autonomy while also recognising the interdependence of their social groups and their place as a valued member. They learn about reliance on others and about our ability to help and support others. Children are comfortable in the here and now of their lives and are able to grow and thrive because they feel they are secure and belong.

When children seek and accept new challenges they show autonomy and agency. From birth, the concept of agency is closely related to the development of a sense of identity. Dramatic play is important for exploring different identities and points of view, including the notion of belonging to global communities. Children should be supported to appreciate similarities and differences between individuals and groups, and to respect different perspectives.

As children learn and develop, they build further on their abilities to cooperate and work collaboratively, demonstrate initiative by asking questions and attempting new challenges. With encouragement, children plan their learning, reflect on their achievements, acknowledge the value of persistence, and enjoy their accomplishments and contributions. A strong sense of identity enables a child to be confident, and to recognise and accept that in any social setting there are consequences for their actions and behaviours. All children, with support, can develop a strong sense of self and learn how to interact with others with care, empathy and respect.

## **OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD**

From birth, children learn to see themselves as individuals, accepting their uniqueness and the uniqueness of others. Children strive for connection and seek belonging - to people, country, place and communities that help them to learn about local ways of being. They learn about sharing common values, traditions and practices. As children experience settings beyond the home and kinship groups in which they live, their experiences, relationships and connections broaden. Across the period from birth to eight years, through the support of family and others, children learn more ways to connect and contribute. Contributing in social settings strengthens children's sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging. Children's wellbeing is linked closely to the wellbeing of their community.

Children increasingly enjoy being in groups and contributing to family and social life from birth. Children who are strongly connected to their world participate in shared everyday routines, events and experiences, and use opportunities to contribute to decisions. They help and show concern for others, learn to respect those who are different from them and practise peaceful and inclusive ways of resolving conflicts. They come to understand fair play and how to make a contribution to a group. Children who are strongly connected establish friendships with other children. They test their responsibilities and rights - and those of others - in familiar settings, such as their family, playgroups, early childhood settings, classrooms and playgrounds, friendship groups and in communities.

Children become aware of the impact of the local environment, both physical and social, on their lives. They learn ways to care for the environment and contribute to a sustainable future.

Children are citizens with equal rights and are consulted meaningfully, with families and communities, about issues that affect them. Consulting with families and children in order to understand their cultural and everyday traditions and routines informs practice. Providing equitable opportunities for children with diverse capabilities and life circumstances supports engagement and connection, enabling them to contribute positively to their world.

Some children require carefully constructed experiences to affirm their belonging and connection with the group and to facilitate their participation in local community experiences. Some may require explicit direction and support to help them to feel safe and to belong. Observing closely and taking cues from the child can show adults how best to help a child connect with and contribute effectively to their world.



### **OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING**

From birth and throughout early childhood, the foundations for physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing are laid. Wellbeing means having good mental and physical health, including attachment, positive affect and self-regulation. This means being able to manage emotions productively and build resilience and persistence, being adaptable and confident, and experiencing feelings of satisfaction and happiness. Early childhood professionals, individually and together, play a key role with families in promoting healthy life practices and children's sense of wellbeing.

Children who have a strong sense of wellbeing develop a range of social skills and dispositions. They learn to be comfortable in the range of settings that are part of their lives. They are becoming capable of seeking and receiving assistance and of being alone and with others. Children learn how to express and manage their feelings and develop self-reliance. Children grow in their capacity to manage their wellbeing, and seek support from others around them to maintain a strong sense of physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.

From birth, relationships that are warm and supportive assist children to express feelings such as joy, sadness, frustration and fear and to identify and accept their own and others' feelings. This supports the development of strong bonds and attachments. Learning to constructively resolve conflicts begins in infancy. Children are supported to express their views in line with their evolving capabilities. With support and guidance around naming and recognising the range of human emotions, children continue to learn and practise strategies that enable them to manage disappointments, anxiety, frustration and loss.

With increasing physical mobility comes greater opportunity to explore and experience the world. Outdoor play promotes children's physical and cognitive development and their ability to assess risk.

Children learn to manage and move their bodies in space in a range of environments and settings. They learn to maintain their own basic hygiene practices and they are able to contribute to and maintain basic health and safety practices.



As children progress and mature, their social skills and resilience increase. They learn to manage emotions and impulses, cope with day-to-day stresses and to persevere and 'have a go' when faced with challenging learning situations. Children experience wellbeing as they develop a sense of achievement, and as they learn to be flexible and adapt to new environments and events.

Maintaining physical health, including managing chronic health conditions, contributes to a sense of wellbeing. This includes a healthy diet and the exercise necessary for healthy living. Children are supported by adults to learn about and encounter a range of nutritious foods, as part of everyday food choices. They enjoy opportunities to grow, cultivate and prepare nutritious food. Children also gain a basic understanding of the aspects of an active lifestyle, including the positive experience of active outdoor play and physical exercise, and the avoidance of substances or products that are harmful to their health and wellbeing.

From birth to eight years, children continually acquire, refine and consolidate their motor functions and skills and integrate their skills across domains.

Dance, drama and musical experiences can combine stillness and movement, and children learn to create and perform simple rhythmic movement sequences. The learning and physical development of young children is evident through their movement patterns, from their physical dependence and reflex actions at birth through to their development of spatial awareness, and the ability to move around their environment confidently and safely. The growth of strong spatial awareness across the early years is also known to positively influence the development of children's mathematical capabilities.

## **OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS**

Children learn in the context of their families and communities. From birth to eight years children continue to establish learning dispositions and patterns of engagement with others that have a profound influence on their learning, behaviour, motivation and capacity for being confident and involved life-long learners.

Responsive learning relationships with all children support them to learn successfully. They are encouraged to be curious and enthusiastic about their learning.

Children are active learners exploring the world through touch, sight, sound, taste, smell and movement. The child's brain develops rapidly through physical explorations and their active engagement with others who speak and respond to their interests. From birth, with the warmth and support of others around them, children experience and come to realise that learning is exploratory and it can be fun and rewarding. Periods of uninterrupted play give children time to invent, investigate and discover, using a rich variety of open-ended materials and resources. Time in the natural world builds confidence and supports discovery.

Young children begin to develop explanations for observed phenomena, and consider what they can learn from experiences. With encouragement, guidance, experience and learning, children further develop the capacity to reflect on their own thinking processes and approaches to learning. This is fundamental to maintaining positive learning and development trajectories.

Children who are confident and involved learners have positive dispositions toward learning, experience challenge and success in their learning and are able to contribute positively and effectively to other children's learning.

They are motivated and resourceful in approaching new learning or taking part in new challenges. They develop and use their imagination and curiosity as they build a 'tool kit' of skills and processes to support problem solving, hypothesising, experimenting, researching, and investigating activity. Metacognition begins to develop as young children begin to 'think aloud' and discuss learning in ways that help to deepen their knowledge of information and processes. They negotiate and set achievable goals, seek to understand and can predict outcomes. With encouragement children become comfortable with taking risks. They know that failure is a valuable part of learning, are able to learn from mistakes to enhance future success, and they become more skilled at seeking help when they need it.

The ability of very young children to understand what is said to them exceeds their ability to express themselves using language. Young children learn from watching and listening, and new skills and understanding can emerge as a result of demonstration and modelling by others.

Children's involvement in learning changes what they know, what they can do, what they value, and transforms their learning. When provided with many opportunities and a rich supply of natural and manufactured materials and tools, children create, build, sculpt, draw, paint and construct, and they enjoy taking part in sustained shared conversations focused on their interests.

When young children are supported to be relaxed and involved, they express wonder and interest in their environment. As they grow, so does their sense of inquiry and thirst for knowledge. From the earliest months of life, children learn critical patterns within events and routine care procedures. Supporting this learning by making sequences and procedures clear and predictable helps children to build their capacity and to function in the world. Children grow in confidence as they learn task-procedures, exercise imagination and help to solve problems, and they learn to stay alert and involved.

As children learn and develop they expand their scientific thinking skills. When given opportunities to generate questions about situations and phenomena, make predictions, carry out systematic courses of action and evaluate results they build further on their skills and knowledge. From birth, children are highly engaged with their environment, and this is the basis for important concept development.

Children learn with their peers, sharing their feelings and thoughts about learning with others. They begin to understand that listening to the responses of others can help them understand and make new meaning of experiences. Children teach others and broaden their learning about the world through connecting with people, places, technologies and natural materials. They manipulate objects to investigate, assemble, invent and construct, and they use their own and others' feedback to revise and build on an idea.

Children benefit from many opportunities to generate and discuss ideas, make plans, exercise skills, brainstorm solutions to problems, reflect and give reasons for their choices. They investigate what products and systems can do, and how they work. Increasingly, they begin to use information and communication technologies to assist their thinking and to represent what they know and understand.

## **OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS**

Children communicate from birth. Most children are innately social, creative and motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings. They begin by using gestures, movement, visual and non-verbal cues, sounds, language and assisted communication to engage in the world and form relationships. Fundamental to this development is the understanding of how symbols and pattern systems work, and how they can be used to engage others. From birth, intentional communication is strengthened and broadened. Children learn to take turns in communication exchanges through their relationships with responsive adults, exploring sound and movement patterns, singing songs, reading stories, playing games and recording their thoughts and ideas.

Children's wellbeing, identity, sense of agency and capacity to make friends is connected to the development of communication skills, and strongly linked to their capacity to express feelings and thoughts, and to be understood.

From birth, children's first gestures and actions are the beginning of communicative competence. In the very early years spoken language emerges in response to role models around the child. Adults who spend time in one-to-one communication with very young children, verbalising and conversing with the child, with multiple back and forth exchanges, make significant contributions to the expansion of children's vocabulary development.

Children are effective communicators. Their communication and self-expression take many forms including sharing stories and symbols from their own culture, re-enacting well-known stories and using creative arts, such as drawing, painting and sculpture, drama, dance, movement and music to communicate with others. They create and explore imaginary worlds through dramatic play and through artworks. They build a large vocabulary and are able to express ideas verbally and use a wide range of media. They recognise the function and value of visual elements and use them to symbolise meaning, for example using colour in painting to express emotions. Young children begin to explore written communication by scribbling, drawing and producing approximations of writing. They use digital technologies and multimedia resources to communicate, play and learn. They create and display their own information in a way that suits different audiences and purposes.

Victorian families and the communities in which children live are diverse. Maintenance of first language is important for children's identity, wellbeing, communication and learning. Children can successfully learn English (or another language) as an additional language through exposure to the language, explicit modelling and language teaching, and appropriate time to acquire the new language. Children benefit when early childhood professionals have knowledge about the acquisition and application of an additional language and how this can vary. It is especially important for early childhood professionals to be knowledgeable about the ways children learn additional languages. This includes awareness of the stages of acquisition and recognition that children differ in their rate of acquisition and application of language. In school settings, children have opportunities to learn a range of languages. For some children this may be an opportunity to continue their first language, and for others the opportunity to learn a new language.

Children use symbols in exploration and play to represent and make meaning. They become aware of the relationships between oral and visual representations, and recognise patterns and relationships. They learn to recognise how sounds are represented alphabetically and identify some letter sounds, symbols, characters and signs. As children continue to build their skills in reading printed text from left to right and top to bottom (in English language households), they use information in context from pictures and other sources to assist in making meaning. As they progress through this stage, children begin to self-correct when reading aloud and distinguish between texts that represent real and imaginary experiences.

As children learn and develop, access to print-rich environments, and contact with adults who model and respond to children's oral and written messages, continue to strengthen the progression of learning. Children increasingly use conventional speech and writing, and simple punctuation. Over time, children learn to use and create simple texts about familiar topics and choose the content, form and vocabulary within their writing. As their skills advance, they accurately spell words that are frequently used and make use of known spelling patterns to make plausible attempts at spelling unfamiliar words.

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S TRANSITIONS

For families with young children, transitions occur on a daily basis. A child may move from the care of a parent to that of a grandparent, or move into an education and care service and between rooms within the service. As children become older they may make the transition into a kindergarten program, and then experience the transition to school.

Transitions are about relationships and involve consistency and change. Families and early childhood professionals work together to provide consistent environments for children between home and other forms of care and education. Recognising and supporting families to manage transitions contributes to children's wellbeing.

Children's confidence in managing change is enhanced when they feel secure in their relationships with others – including parents, early childhood professionals and peers. Children who are supported to manage change can build resilience as they develop and try out a range of skills and strategies while moving between contexts, such as home and school, or kindergarten and school. Early childhood professionals can help children build social and emotional skills and strategies – such as perseverance, sociability and self-esteem – by recognising the strengths they bring to transitions and building on the competence they demonstrate.



## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY OF LEARNING - STORY DESCRIPTION

- The river stepping stones represent **children and families** in transition.
- The footprints and wheelchair marks symbolise all **abilities**.
- Animal footprints show children and families walking proudly **with culture** in transition.

## WHAT DOES EFFECTIVE TRANSITION LOOK LIKE?

What makes an effective transition will depend on the context. However, effective transitions are achieved when the child and family have a sense of belonging and acceptance in the new context. Strategies professionals use to achieve this include:

- the development of respectful, trusting and supportive relationships with children and their families
- reciprocal relationships that actively support sharing and valuing relevant information
- professional roles and partnerships with shared goals that support ongoing reflective practice
- recognition of children's agency and their role in transitions
- demonstrated respect for the cultural histories and heritage of all involved in transition processes
- recognition of the strengths and capacities of all involved in transition, reflected in high expectations and a commitment to equity
- approaches that are adaptive for diverse family contexts in local communities
- developing a common language and shared understanding of pedagogy and practice between professionals
- the availability of appropriate and ongoing support for early childhood professionals, children and families.

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION?

Children, families and early childhood professionals are involved in transitions throughout early childhood. Respectful, trusting and supportive relationships provide the context for effective transitions.

Children's sense of competence and worth, as well as their regard for themselves as successful learners, is enhanced when they feel that the new environment is a place where others care about them and where they can succeed. Children are active participants and contribute diverse perspectives about transitions. Listening to children's views and involving them in planning transitions demonstrates respect and builds a climate of trust and engagement. Effective transitions are based on early childhood professionals recognising the strengths and capabilities children bring with them to transition experiences.

Families are crucial for consistency and continuity when children are making transitions. Valuing and respecting the knowledge and experiences of families from culturally diverse backgrounds contributes to positive relationships. Partnerships with families demonstrate to children that they and their families are important participants in the educational context.

Families also undergo changes during transitions and manage these changes at the same time as they support the transition experiences of their children.

A range of early childhood professionals from health and education sectors may be involved in working collaboratively with children and families to plan transitions. When different sectors and services work collaboratively with families, processes are in place for sharing information, discussion of approaches, critical reflection on practice and outcomes to support continuity of learning for each child.



## SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT DURING TRANSITIONS

Children's learning is promoted when they engage with interested others in environments that provide both support and challenge. Early childhood professionals are well placed to use transitions to promote learning when they bring together their professional knowledge and their understandings of individual children, their families, and communities. Transitions are opportunities for educators to recognise each child's interests, cultures and abilities and to build on these in meaningful ways.

Educators draw on a range of information to create supportive and challenging learning environments. Information shared by families and other professionals, as well as the children themselves, informs professional knowledge and insights. Structured assessments, such as the School Entry Health and Wellbeing Assessments, the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status or the Transition Learning and Development Statement, inform decisions about appropriate learning opportunities, environments and approaches. Using a range of information to plan experiences and environments is an important element in promoting children's learning, along with ongoing reflection and evaluation.

Strong relationships with children and their families and clear professional protocols for sharing information, form the basis for informed decision-making during transitions. Children's agency, and their engagement in learning, is respected and promoted when they have an active role in making decisions.

Increasingly, early childhood professionals recognise the importance of a shared understanding of pedagogy and practice between professionals in the different settings that children and families attend. Early childhood professionals in the first years of school benefit from their knowledge of the VEYLDF Outcomes and Practice Principles when implementing the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Similarly, educators in early childhood education and care settings can build their understandings of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 to support continuity of learning as children transition to school. The illustrative maps between the VEYLDF and the Victorian Curriculum F-10 provided at **Attachment 1** are a useful resource to support this shared understanding.

## TRANSITION: A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Starting school is a major life transition for children and their families. Both challenging and exciting, it's a time of change in which children, families and educators adjust to new roles, identities and expectations, new interactions and new relationships.

The transition is not a one-off event. It is not complete at the end of the first day of kindergarten or school. Transition is a process that occurs over time. Even though groups of children may start kindergarten or school together, their individual characteristics and experiences make each transition a unique situation.

The Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative (the initiative) aims to improve children's experience of starting school by enhancing the development and delivery of transition programs. This approach enables a shared understanding between early childhood services and schools about what is important for children and their families during this exciting time.

The initiative is accompanied by a comprehensive Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit for schools and early childhood services, which provides detailed information about effective programs and approaches to transition planning, including advice about additional support for specific groups of children and families. It also includes the Transition Learning and Development Statement, which families and educators use to share information about their child's learning and development.

For children with a disability or developmental delay, to make a positive transition from kindergarten to school, there are additional sections of the Transition Learning and Development Statement that should be completed to help the school understand specific information and requirements to support the child's orientation to school. Early Abilities Based Learning Education Support (Early ABLES) can also be used as an assessment for learning and programming resource to support the development of individual education plans and continuity of learning for children with developmental delay or disabilities as they transition into and across services and schools.

# CONCLUSION

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework supports all children's learning and development from birth to eight years. It does this by enabling all early childhood professionals to work together and with families to achieve common outcomes for all children.

It sets the highest expectations for all children in every community across Victoria, and generates opportunities for families and early childhood professionals to work together to advance all learning and development outcomes.

The VEYLDF emphasises the importance of sensitive, responsive and engaging practice.

It informs daily collaborations and interactions with children, families and with other professionals.

Local discussions and learning networks will enable professionals to reflect on their work and on children's learning and development trajectories to inform future practice.

The VEYLDF continues to be used as the basis for research into early childhood policy, provision and program effectiveness. Ongoing research will continue to support growth, transformation and the effectiveness of all professionals who work with children in these formative early childhood years.

By creating a common language and understanding of children's learning and development outcomes, the VEYLDF supports opportunities for increased coordination and integration of all early childhood services.

The VEYLDF is enacted as early childhood professionals engage with it and use it to inform their practice for the immediate and long-term benefit of all children in Victoria.

# APPENDICES

## OVERVIEW

There are five appendices designed to support this document.

These appendices are provided to :

- enhance understanding of the diverse roles of early childhood professionals, and the range of early childhood services and programs available to families and children (birth to eight years) and professionals
- inform collaboration between professionals and with families, and support strategic referrals to appropriate services
- provide an overview of regulatory responsibilities, information and evidence that informs the VEYLDF and resources that support implementation
- assist further exploration of concepts or materials described in the document through a detailed Bibliography
- inform common understanding of language used in the early years birth to eight period through an extensive Glossary of Terms.

# APPENDIX 1

## OVERVIEW OF THE ROLES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS)

*Allied health professionals* are speech pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, developmental paediatricians, and other specialists who support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the child and family.

*Cultural organisations* such as libraries, museums, zoos, galleries and botanic gardens employ early childhood professionals to design and deliver programs to support learning and development for children and families. Early childhood services and schools work with cultural organisations through on-site, online and outreach programs.

*Early childhood educators* are defined in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia as all 'early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings'. This includes certificate-qualified, diploma-qualified and degree-qualified teachers or educators working across all forms of all early childhood settings.

These settings include long day care, family day care, occasional care, playgroups, outside school hours care and kindergarten.

*Early childhood intervention workers* are professionals from a range of health and education backgrounds who work in a variety of settings to support children with a disability or developmental delay in early childhood education and care, and their families.

*Educational leaders* are responsible for promoting positive organisational culture and building a professional learning community within early childhood education services. The educational leader has responsibility for leading the development of the curriculum and ensuring the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.

*Education support officers* comprise teacher aides and integration aides who together play an important role in supporting teachers and schools to implement inclusive approaches to education. They support children and families who experience a disability or developmental delay, or require access to a special needs program.

*Family support workers* include professionals from a range of health, welfare and/or education backgrounds, who provide support and services to families experiencing vulnerable circumstances to assist with parenting capacity, family strengthening and connection with other community supports and services. Family support workers are employed by family support agencies.

The *Inclusion Support Programme* is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training who has contracted seven inclusion Agencies to deliver inclusion support services to eligible early childhood education and care services. Inclusion Agencies employ Inclusion Professionals who assist services to include children with additional needs by providing tailored inclusion advice, linking services with other relevant organisations, access to specialist equipment, developing and implementing a Strategic Inclusion Plan and to access funding support for more challenging inclusion barriers.

*Koorie Engagement Support Officers* focus specifically on the engagement of Koorie students, families and communities within the government school and early childhood systems, as well as kindergartens and other areas of early childhood.

*Koorie Preschool Assistants* work within kindergarten programs and Koorie communities to enhance the access and participation of Koorie children in kindergarten programs. They promote and assist in the delivery of Koorie inclusive programs, provide information and support to Koorie families and communities, support the attendance of Koorie children in kindergarten programs, encourage the involvement and participation of Koorie parent/families/carers in the development of kindergarten programs, and assist in the development of kindergarten programs that embrace Koorie culture.

*Maternal and child health nurses* are registered nurses with qualifications in midwifery and family and child health. They work in maternal and child health services, which offer support, information and advice regarding parenting, child health and development, child behaviour, maternal health and wellbeing, child safety, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ROLES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS)

*Play therapists, health professionals and teachers* support health, wellbeing and the continuity of children's learning and development whilst accessing services through hospital settings.

*Preschool field officers* provide consultancy to early childhood teachers and parents to facilitate the inclusion of all children in state-funded kindergarten programs.

*Primary school nurses* conduct health assessments of all students in participating schools in their first year of school, provide follow-up contact with parents, respond to referrals from school staff regarding identified health issues for students at any year level, and provide referrals to relevant health practitioners.

*Primary welfare officers* enhance the capacity of schools to support students who are at risk of disengaging from school and not achieving their educational potential. They inform the development of tailored programs to meet the individual needs, interests and abilities of 'at risk' students. Their work is central to building and maintaining continuity of care for students and their families, by ensuring ongoing engagement with the school, school community and relevant services.

*Student support service officers* include visiting teachers, psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers and other allied health professionals. Their role is to enhance the capacity of Victorian government schools to meet the additional learning and wellbeing needs of children and young people through the provision of access to school and community specialist support.

*Teachers* are degree-qualified and work as educators in early childhood settings and schools, including special schools.

*Visiting teachers* provide direct teaching, high-level advice and a range of supports to classroom teachers, education support staff, families and the wider school community. Visiting teachers often provide region-wide support to students, working with eligible students in three streams: physical/health impaired, vision impaired, and hearing impaired. Visiting teachers may also be employed in specialist areas, such as autism, learning difficulties/disabilities, attendance or behaviour support where they have the required expertise.

## APPENDIX 2

### OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES (BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS)

- i. Overview of early childhood services for families.
- ii. Overview of programs and resources to support early childhood professionals.

This appendix is available online at:

**Department of Education and Training website:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/veylf>

**Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website:**

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx>

## APPENDIX 3

### OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT BEST PRACTICE OF EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS

- i. Approved Frameworks, Legislation and Standards.
- ii. Information and Evidence.
- iii. Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework resources and communication.

This appendix is available online at:

**Department of Education and Training website:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/veylf>

**Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website:**

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx>

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# APPENDIX 5

## GLOSSARY

**Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person:** a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as such and is accepted as such by his or her community. This definition is accepted by most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Importantly it focuses on the social/community construction of Aboriginality.

**Agency:** being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world. The concept of agency applies from birth: children are active contributors to their own experiences, interactions, learning and development.

**Attunement:** the alignment of states of mind in moments of engagement, during which affect is communicated with facial expression, vocalisations, body gestures and eye contact.

**Buffering effect:** an effect that lessens or absorbs the shock of an impact. For example, impact of trauma and loss. Responsive relationships can provide a buffering effect from developmental disruption. This includes supporting young children to build positive dispositions for learning.

**Communities:** social or cultural groups or networks that share a common purpose, heritage, rights and responsibilities and/or other bonds. 'Communities' is used variously to refer, for example, to the community within early childhood settings, extended kinships, the local geographic community and broader Australian society.

**Context:** surroundings, circumstances and supports, shaped by family, culture and experiences (as per: EYPC (Figure 3) and the Ecological Model (Figure 2)).

**Creative skills:** children's capacities and competencies to use and develop their imagination in all areas of learning by exploring their ideas. The early childhood professional's creative skills are also part of planning for arts learning (music, dance, drama, media and visual art). Children's artistic skills and thinking are promoted by exploring, expressing, making and responding in the art forms. Creative skills are not only linked to the arts; they are important in all areas of the curriculum and developed by the children and early childhood professional's use of problem solving to guide teaching and learning.

**Dispositions for learning:** enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to learning situations, for example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence.

**Environmental sustainability:** a state in which the demands placed on the environment can be met without reducing its capacity, to allow all people to live well now and in the future. The complex interplay of social, economic and political contexts influence environmental sustainability. Creating environmental sustainability requires the development of approaches that address how to sustain life through the relational collective of healthy people, plants, air, water, animals and place.

**Environmental equity and justice:** the right to a healthy and safe quality of life for all people now and for future generations. Environmental justice emphasises accountability, democratic practices, equitable treatment and self-determination.

**Equity:** the quality of being fair and just. Equity in early childhood education and care means that the rights of the child to fully participate in these spaces are honoured. Equitable practice values and respects diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender and ability. Barriers to achievement are consciously addressed within a strengths based approach in consultation with children, families and communities.

**Executive functioning:** the over-arching capacity of an individual to manage what they attend to and think about, and how they combine this new information with what they already know. Across birth to eight years it is evidenced in children's growing capacity to think things through and make well-considered decisions. From birth, the development of executive functioning is supported by positive and responsive interactions with significant people.

**Inclusion:** involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's rights and experiences are recognised and valued, and that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.

**Information and communications technology (ICT):** digital and technological environments for development, communication and knowledge creation. Digital environments refer to computers (including laptops, tablets, smart boards) and computer games, the Internet, television and radio, among others.

## GLOSSARY

**Involvement:** a state of intense, whole hearted mental activity, characterised by sustained concentration and intrinsic motivation. Highly involved children (and adults) operate at the limit of their capacities, leading to changed ways of responding and understanding leading to deep level learning (adapted from Laevers, 1994).

Children's involvement can be recognised by their facial, vocal and emotional expressions, the energy, attention and care they apply and the creativity and complexity they bring to the situation (adapted from Reflect, Respect, Relate, DECS 2008).

**Literacy and language skills:** in the early years, literacy includes a range of modes of communication, including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, viewing, reading, drawing and writing.

As children progress into and through the early years of school there is increased emphasis on texts and the child's writing.

A consideration of children's language involves expressive and receptive language skills that include syntax (ability to form sentences), morphology (ability to form words), semantics (understanding the meaning of words/sentences), phonology (awareness of speech sounds), pragmatics (how language is used in different contexts) and vocabulary.

**Motor skills:** the ability to create body movements that result from the interplay of the brain, nervous system and muscles. Motor skills are generally divided into fine motor skills (for example, movements of the smaller joints of the hands and fingers) and gross motor skills (for example, rolling, moving from sitting to standing, walking, running).

**Multidisciplinary approaches:** ways of working where early childhood professionals from different disciplines are involved in the provision of integrated and coordinated services for children and families to support the best outcomes. In the early years across birth to eight years, multidisciplinary approaches may include, but are not limited to maternal and child health, educators, community workers, allied health professionals and medical personnel working together.

**Numeracy:** includes understandings about numbers, structure and pattern, measurement, spatial awareness and data, as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting.

**Pedagogy:** early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

**Rights:** legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. Rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory.

**Science skills:** includes the development of scientific knowledge, questioning of scientific phenomena and the ability to draw conclusions about scientific subjects. Science skills also encompass the development of an awareness of how science and technology shape and affect our material, intellectual and cultural environments, and the ability to understand that we all are a part of nature's cycles.

**Sensitivity:** the quality of understanding how a child feels, and the early childhood professional's responsiveness to children's needs and emotions. It is the ability of the early childhood professional to respond and interact in ways that are appropriate to the capabilities of the child, and with care, warmth and attentiveness (adapted from Macmillan, 2014).

**Sustained shared thinking:** 'when two or more individuals work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept [or] evaluate an activity. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the understanding' (Sylva et al., 2004, p. 6).

For early childhood professionals, sustained shared thinking involves children and educators working together in conversations, which provide opportunities to discuss and think about problems or challenges in a serious, extended way (adapted from NQS PLP e-learning Newsletter No. 43, 2012).

**Socio-emotional development:** social and emotional learning that occurs from birth through interactions, relationships and everyday experiences with others. As children's socio-emotional development advances they become increasingly able to form and sustain positive relationships, experience, manage and express emotions, and explore and engage with their environment.

**Spirituality:** a range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder, a search for purpose and meaning and the exploration of being and knowing.

## GLOSSARY

**Technologies:** the diverse range of products that make up the designed world, encompassing not only computers and digital technologies but also processes, systems, services, environments and machines.

**Texts:** things that we read, view and listen to and that we create in order to share meaning. Texts can be print-based, such as books, magazines and posters or screen-based, for example internet sites and DVDs. Many texts are multimodal, integrating images, written words and/or sound.

**Transitions:** the process of moving between environments or routines, including between home and early childhood settings.

**The Natural World:** the biosphere that sustains us, including the Earth itself, the air we breathe, the soil and water, the plants and animals that we interact with.

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989):** a human rights treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. It advances an image of children as subjects of rights and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationships with others.

The 54 Articles contained in the UNCRC (1989) promote children's rights through four key principles, namely:

### 1. Protection against discrimination

*Young children and groups of children must not be discriminated against. Discrimination may take the form of reduced levels of nutrition; inadequate care and attention; restricted opportunities for play, learning and education; or inhibition of free expression of feelings and views.*

### 2. The right to survival and development

*All measures possible to create... conditions that promote the wellbeing of all young children during this critical phase of their lives.*

### 3. The best interests of the child

*This applies to all actions concerning children and requires active measures to protect their rights and promote their survival, growth and wellbeing, as well as measures to support and assist parents and others who have day to day responsibility for realising children's rights.*

### 4. The right to participation

*The child has a right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, and to have them taken into account. This right reinforces the status of the young child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of their rights.*

**United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** the body of independent experts appointed to monitor implementation of the UNCRC. **'Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) (CRC/C/GC/7/Rev. 1):** Through this general comment, the UNCRC was seeking to encourage recognition that young children are holders of all rights enshrined in the Convention and that early childhood is a critical period for the realization of these rights. 'The Committee's working definition of "early childhood" is all young children: at birth and throughout infancy; during the preschool years; as well as during the transition to school'. The value of this document for early childhood professionals is that it acknowledges the tensions around enacting the key principles underlying children's rights and explores principles and practical measures for implementing rights-based principles in early childhood educational contexts.

### **The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter):**

a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It is about the relationship between government and the people it serves. The Charter requires public authorities, such as Victorian state and local government departments and agencies, and people delivering services on behalf of government, to act consistently with the human rights in the Charter.

**Wellbeing:** the result of the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection, security and clarity, social recognition, to feel competent, physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994).

It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience.

**World View:** the lens through which people understand and interpret the world. An individual's world views are underpinned by culture and are often informed by the ideas of the dominant group in society. Within early childhood education and care world views inform understandings of childhood and the philosophy and practice of early childhood practitioners.

# VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – THREE ELEMENTS

## PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

- Bunjil the Eagle and Waa the Crow represent Aboriginal culture and **partnerships with families**.
- The water hole symbolises **reflective practice**.
- The gum leaves with their different patterns and colours represent **diversity**.
- The stones underneath the leaves represent **equity**. They reflect the additional support put in place in order for all children to achieve.
- The child and adults standing on 'Ochre mountain' symbolise the **high/equitable expectations** we hold for children and adults.
- The family standing on and looking out from 'Ochre mountain' reflects **assessment for learning and development**. Such assessments draw on children's and families' perspectives, knowledge, experiences and expectations.
- The child and adult figures also represent **partnerships with professionals**.
- The land symbol as mother earth represents the basis for **respectful relationships and responsive engagement**.
- The symbols for land, water and people signify **holistic and integrated** approaches based on connections to Clan and Country.



Child at the centre surrounded by kin, family and those professionals supporting learning and development, health and wellbeing.

## OUTCOMES

- Gum leaves as bush medicine symbolise connection to **wellbeing**.
- The yam daisy represents the survival of a strong Aboriginal **identity**. The yam daisy was central to the diet of Aboriginal Victorians. It was almost wiped out by colonisation but has survived.
- The family sitting under the scar trees with message stick and coolamon symbolises **communication**.
- The family seated on the land also symbolises the child **learning** through their connection to and involvement with **community**.

## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

- The river stepping stones represent **children and families** in transition.
- The footprints and wheelchair marks symbolise all **abilities**.
- Animal footprints show children and families walking proudly **with culture** in transition.

### Story description

Dr Sue Lopez Atkinson (Yorta Yorta)

Artwork by Annette Sax (Taungurung)

# ATTACHMENT 1

## ILLUSTRATIVE MAPS FROM THE VEYLDF TO THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM F-10

The Illustrative Maps are provided to support a continuity of learning between the VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes and the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10. These Maps enable early childhood professionals to plan experiences and opportunities that advance children's learning.

Early childhood education and care professionals identify and describe learning in the five Learning and Development Outcomes. They use this to inform their pedagogy, plan effective learning experiences and to support their curriculum decision making.

Teachers and educators in the early years of school value the foundational learning that children bring to school and build on this learning. The VEYLDF Illustrative Maps support teachers to design experiences that enable children to demonstrate their progress in learning, knowledge and capabilities.

These joint approaches to planning support all children's progression along a continuum of achievement.

The Illustrative maps can be found as posters in this kit or online at:

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/curriculumframework.aspx>







