Module 5
Curriculum decisions and social and emotional learning

The curriculum decisions that ECEC services and educators make can have a great influence on children’s social and emotional learning opportunities. Reviewing and modifying ECEC service policies and practices with social and emotional learning in mind can support children’s mental health and wellbeing.

Connections to the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard

The Principles and Practices in the EYLF outline the important considerations that educators make in planning and implementing the program for children, with an emphasis on supporting children’s learning in the five Learning Outcome areas.

The NQS encourages educators to think about how each curriculum decision impacts on children’s learning and development. For example,

- **Quality Area 1 (Educational Program and Practice)** acknowledges the importance of considering social and emotional learning opportunities that support children’s progress.
- **Quality Area 2 (Children’s Health and Safety)** sets out requirements to ensure children’s safety and attention to physical wellbeing.
- **Quality Area 3 (Physical Environment)** includes environmental considerations that promote desirable social and emotional learning.
- **Quality Area 4 (Staffing Arrangements)** acknowledges the importance of educator-child relationships and social and emotional learning.
- **Quality Area 5 (Relationships with Children)** prioritises relationships with children.
- **Quality Area 6 (Collaborative Relationships with Families and Communities)** highlights the importance of relationships with families for children’s outcomes.

In the early childhood setting curriculum means “all interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development.”

(\textit{Te Whariki, as cited in Early Years Learning Framework, p.9})

Educators have many opportunities throughout the day to support children’s social and emotional learning, both incidental and planned. Policies and practices at the service level also have an effect on children’s social and emotional learning. Record any observations or questions you may have in the space below.

“The Early Years Learning Framework has a very broad definition of curriculum. It says that the curriculum is the whole experience of the child, from the time that they walk in the door to the time they leave.”

\textit{Anne Stonehouse, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning Video 5.1}
Partnerships with families

Consider:
- Welcoming families
- Enrolment processes
- Sharing information
- Programming decisions

Structuring the day

Consider:
- Staffing arrangements
- Time alone versus group time
- One-on-one opportunities
- Flexibility
- Involving children in decision making
- Active and quiet times
- Transitions and routines

The physical environment (indoors and outdoors)

Consider:
- Arrangement of environment
- Reflection of families
- Availability of quiet areas
- Spaces for alone time
- Areas for different noise levels
- Use of the outdoors
- Level of stimulation
- How the space looks
- Spaces for families and children of different ages

Routines

Consider:
- Arrivals and departures
- Rest and sleep
- Meal and snack times
- Toilet and nappy changing
- Transitions

Planned learning experiences

Consider:
- Books and stories
- Dramatic play
- Sensory play
- Involving children in setting limits
- Respect for diversity and difference

Policies

Consider:
- Service statement of philosophy
- Code of conduct for staff
- Policy decisions regarding staffing arrangements, rosters and professional development
- Policy decisions regarding how children move from one room to the next, family grouping and meal time arrangements
- Service guides and handbooks for staff, educators and families

“...we have to remember that children learn an awful lot from an experience; they’re active contributors to their own learning. They don’t always need adult to step in to teach them something, but they do need an educator to set up a lot of experiences to help them learn these skills.”

Anne Stonehouse, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning
What is one thing I could do to support children's social and emotional learning through curriculum decisions I make?

Over the next week?

Over the next 12 months?

What is one thing we could do as a service to support children's social and emotional learning through curriculum decisions we make?

Over the next week?

Over the next 12 months?

What social and emotional learning opportunities does a routine experience, such as lunchtime, offer children in your service? What changes would improve or increase the learning opportunities?

Consider a recent planned experience you provided for children at your service. What was the intention and purpose you had in mind? What do you think they learned about themselves, their relationships and how others see them?

Consider an experience that occurred more spontaneously or where a planned experience changed in response to children's initiative. What opportunities did this present for social and emotional learning?
Decide on one change that you would like to make in the curriculum areas discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your aims in making the change?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you make this change individually? If not, who will you need to consult with? (e.g., educators in your room, Director, Educational Leader, families, children)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What will be the first step in making the change?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How might this change influence children’s mental health and wellbeing?</td>
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You might also be interested in...


Module 6 is scheduled for:

Date: | Time: | Venue:
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This activity has been designed for you to take away and do before you move onto the next module. It will help integrate what you have learned during this session.