Critical Reflection in Practice

A simple guide to support family day care educators

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QA1 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM & PRACTICE QA2 CHILDREN'S HEALTH & SAFETY QA3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT QA4 STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS QA5 RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN QA6 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES QA7 GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

SECURE, RESPECTFUL & RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS • PARTNERSHIPS • HIGH EXPECTATIONS & EQUITY
• RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY • ONGOING LEARNING & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

BB

WHAT?

Reflect on what happened. Make initial observations.

WHAT?

- What was I trying to achieve today / this week? What actually happened?
- How did the learning environment engage the children?
- Was there a good balance of learning experiences?
- What did I observe? What did I expect to see and what did I not?
- What evidence was there of children's learning?
- What are my understandings of each child?
- What did I learn about each child's knowledge, abilities, strengths, culture, interests?
- Were my learning program and documented observations clearly mapped to the EYLF?
- What theories and philosophies shape my approach as an educator?
- How did I share information about the children's learning with their families?

SO WHAT?

Ask deeper questions to better understand what happened.

SO WHAT?

development?

- What worked, what didn't, and why?
- How did I respond and why? How did I feel?
- What did I find challenging or confronting? What am I curious about?
- How did I maximise opportunities for each child's learning and
- How did my personal values and possible biases influence my approaches or my interactions with children or families?
- Whose voice has been heard and whose not?
- What alternative approaches could I try?
- Was there any feedback from the children or families that will help me improve my approach or practice?
- What did I learn about myself personally and in my role as educator?

TOYS

WHAT NEXT?

Consider what improvements to make and take action.

WHAT NEXT?

- How can I apply what I have learned through my critical reflections?
- What should I continue, improve or change?
- How have my understandings of each child developed?
- What professional understanding, knowledge and skills do I need to build?
- What research, supports or resources do I need to access to help me?
- What is my greatest challenge to implementing improvements to my program? What can I do about this?
- Do I need to allocate more time to planning? Or to observation and documentation?
- Who can I share my thoughts with? How can I expand my professional network?
- What strengths do I have that I could share with my fellow educators?

What is critical reflection?

It is an ongoing, dynamic process of thinking honestly, deeply and critically, on a regular basis, about all aspects of our practice as professional educators. It is a learned skill that helps you to think more purposefully and enriches your decision making.

Through the critical reflection process you ask yourself important questions about:

- what has happened
- children's learning and development in relation to the approved learning frameworks
- your knowledge and practices as a professional educator
- your learning program and learning environment
- your interactions with children, their families and the wider community.

What should frame the critical reflection process?

The process of critical reflection should occur within the context of the frameworks governing early childhood education and care in Australia:

- The National Quality Framework (NQF) which specifies a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement. The NQF includes National Quality Standards (NQS) that set benchmarks in quality practice through 7 Quality Areas, 15 Standards and 40 Elements. NQS Element 1.3.2 explicitly states:
 - Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
- The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) which is the national early childhood education curriculum document.
 - The EYLF includes ongoing learning and reflective practice as one of its five key principles to guide effective practice.

How do you demonstrate evidence of critical reflection?

- It is important to document why and how you made decisions and changes as a result of your critical reflections. You can document in various ways. For example:
- in the learning program itself
- in a reflective journal or daily diary
- in minutes of team meetings.
- Documenting the critical reflection process provides the groundwork for turning reflection into action!





Scan here for practical tips and ideas on how to use this guide to critical reflection.

