Early Learning

Educational Program and Practice Policy

1. Policy Statement

All decisions made by educators and Uniting Victoria & Tasmania are guided by a commitment to children's safety, rights, and best interests.

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Working in partnership with children and families
- Embedding wellbeing education within the curriculum to foster emotional literacy, respectful relationships, self-help skills, healthy lifestyle habits and positive mental practises
- Modelling calm, respectful and emotionally responsive educational interactions that promote a strong sense of safety, wellbeing and belonging
- Collaborating with families and community services to support holistic wellbeing and early intervention where required
- Supporting each child to strive for learning outcomes consistent with their needs and the approved learning framework
- Providing high-quality curriculum and pedagogical practice that is based on contemporary theory reflective practice, critical analysis and planning
- Providing an educational program where children are active agents in their learning can learn through play and are supported to make decisions, problem-solve and build positive relationships with others
- Creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- Recognising the value of involving children and families in the development and review of a collaborative educational program
- Developing programs that are accountable to children and families, organisation and funding and regulatory bodies
- Collaborative communication that informs and invites participation by others in the educational program and practice
- Critically reflect on all pedagogical practice to influence decision-making and drive continuous quality improvement
- Have meaningful engagement and actively seek input, guidance and feedback from children, families and the service community to shape ongoing practice and foster a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging for all.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following persons:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians
- Contractors, volunteers, and students.

3. Executive Summary

Children's right to be heard and have their views taken seriously was established via Article 12 and Article 31 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and is embedded in practice.

Allowing children to have a voice fosters the development and understanding of:
social development, democracy, independence, resilience, and self-esteem and confidence.

Children's safety and wellbeing are paramount at our service and will be fostered through responsive relationships, engaging experiences and a safe and healthy environment. A safe environment is a place where children feel comfortable and safe to play, talk, or relax. A safe environment is also a place that is safe from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional harm or abuse.

Children learn from birth and their interactions with the world around them will build the foundation for their lifelong journey of learning. Uniting Early Learning recognises children's agency and views from birth and will provide educational programs that; are simultaneously nurturing and engaging, will enhance children's learning and development, and are based on approved learning frameworks that support children to be confident and creative learners.

Each child is recognised as a citizen, with the right to participate in decisions that affect them, which includes their learning. Their developmental strengths, challenges, interests, capabilities and participation will actively influence the creation of learning environments and programs.

Each service will implement a program planning cycle, built on the principles of continuous improvement, which will include a suite of documentation that demonstrates each child's progress correlated to the learning outcomes of the educational program. Educators will collect evidence, analyse and use a professional inquiry approach to develop intentional teaching strategies, for both individuals and groups of children.

Educators, children, families, and other relevant professionals will work together in partnership, to co-construct and evaluate learning programs. Cultural and social contexts will be valued and included, to reflect the diversity of local communities. Regular communication between the service and parents will provide ongoing information about the content and implementation of the educational program, their child's participation in the program and documentation relating to assessments or evaluations of their child.

4. Current Environmental Context

The following current, approved learning frameworks are underpinned by practices and principles that encourage reflection and provide educators with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood curriculum in a contemporary context.

- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia.

Early Childhood Teachers develop their understanding of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards), which reflect and build on national and international evidence that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students. With broad consensus that teacher quality is the single most important factor influencing student achievement.

A copy of the educational program is accessible to all stakeholders, including parents and is presented in a manner that children can make connections with.

The value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and perspectives is embedded and promoted by the service and is valued in the educational program and its delivery to children.

Children have a fundamental right to be protected and kept safe when they attend an education and care service. Unsafe settings and situations can negatively impact on children's physical health and wellbeing, which in turn can negatively affect their experiences, learning and wellbeing in the present and throughout their lives. Maintaining a child safe culture promotes children's safety, dignity and rights and takes steps to prevent child maltreatment, abuse and neglect. *Guide to the NQF P. 182*

Educators include information from a wide range of sources to help them assess and plan effectively. The content of learning experiences and activities; will include, literacy, numeracy, science, engineering, the arts, the humanities, and technology. The physical environment plays a key role in the delivery of quality programs and is to be considered at all stages of planning. A variety of intentional teaching strategies are to be used to maximise children's learning opportunities and to make learning visible to all.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) integrate opportunities for learning across literacy, numeracy, STEM, creative arts, physical activity, sustainability, digital technologies and community engagement. Safe risk taking, independence and confidence are embedded in the program. The indoor and outdoor environments are intentionally designed to promote exploration, collaboration, creativity, physical wellbeing, quiet retreat and social interaction.

A suitable Educational Leader will be nominated to lead the development and implementation of the educational program and pedagogy at the service. This person will have suitable qualifications and experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the relevant approved learning framework, enabling them to guide other educators in planning and reflection, and to mentor colleagues in implementation practices (refer to *Attachment 26d).*

OSHC programming is responsive to children's interests, strengths, ideas and recognises children as capable and active contributors to their own learning. Children are provided with genuine choice and opportunities to influence program planning that is created through feedback, informal conversation, reflective observations and collaboration. The educational program reflects the principles of leisure-based learning within the Outside School Hours Care context and recognises that children require opportunities for both engagement and downtime. Therefore, experiences are tailored to provide both structured and unstructured play, relaxation and social connection.

5. Responsibilities relating to the Education Program & Practice

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency Staff, Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensure that the educational program is: • Based on an approved learning framework • Is delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework • Is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child • Is designed to take into account the individual differences of each child *S168 & R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Designate a suitably qualified and experienced Educational Leader to lead the development and implementation of educational programs at the service *R118*	**R**	✓			
Ensure the staff record includes the name of the person designated as the educational leader *R148*	**R**	✓			
Ensure the name of the Educational Leader is displayed prominently at the service *R173*	**R**	✓			
Ensure a copy of the educational program is accessible to parents and children *R75*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure the educational program contributes to each child: • Developing a strong sense of identity • Being connected with, and contributing to, his or her world • Having a strong sense of wellbeing • Being a confident and involved learner • Being an effective communicator *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure the developmental needs, strengths, interests and experiences, and individual differences of each child are accommodated and documented in the educational program (refer to *Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Policy) R74*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
When designing the program, ensure the space is accessible and suitable for all children (mobility, sign language, developmentally appropriate, less stimulation for children with autism etc) *R105*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Develop, implement and evaluate the educational program in collaboration with the educators, children and service community *S168*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency Staff, Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
When designing the program, ensure the space is accessible and suitable for all children (mobility, sign language, developmentally appropriate, less stimulation for children with autism etc) *R105*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Assist leaders to embed child agency, choice and independence within daily practises *R73, R 155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Support the intentional design of environments to promote active play, creativity, social interactions and quiet retreat spaces	✓	✓	✓		✓
Model emotionally intelligent leadership that fosters psychological safety, professional trust and collaborative accountability	✓	✓	✓		✓
OSHC scaffold the development of leisure-based educational programming, with considerations for open-ended learning through play, project work and collaborative inquiry *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
OSHC mentor educators to balance structured experiences with relaxation and downtime to support wellbeing, child agency and belonging *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure that the service philosophy guides educational program and practice	✓	✓	✓		✓
Ensure that assessments of each child's learning, participation and progress against the outcomes of the educational program are documented *R74*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure there are evaluations of children's wellbeing, development and learning for children over preschool age (OSHC & FDC) *R74*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure there is a current record of learning and development for each child in centre-based care and FDC, and that it is updated and maintained on an ongoing basis *R74*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Undertake critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, to drive program planning and implementation		✓	✓		✓
Build effective relationships with families to ensure educational programs are informed by family and community context		✓	✓		✓
Ensure that parents are provided with information their child's participation in the program and documentation relating to assessments or evaluations of their child *R76*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency Staff, Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Maintain a current knowledge of contemporary practice which is reflected in the program	✓	✓	✓		✓
Children have the right for their privacy and confidentiality to be maintained, including agreement to any artwork being displayed or shared		✓	✓		✓
Children have the right to be assured that their engagement will be worthwhile and enjoyable		✓	✓		✓
Communicate regularly with the service in relation to their child's learning and development				✓	

6. Related Documents

Forms

Form 26.1 - UF-EL-067-Educational Leader Acceptance 26.1.docx

7. Reference/Sources

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *Child Safety Policy*
- *Child Safe Code of Conduct*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- *Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition Oral Heath and Active Play Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics*
- *Child Safe Standards 2022*
- Assessment for Learning Tool. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, ACECQA*
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA*
- *Marrung – Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026*
- *My Time Our Place, Framework for School age care in Australia*
- *Children's Services amendment Act 2019*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2020*
- *Developing a Culture of Learning through Reflective Practice. Information Sheet. National Quality Standard. Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (Oct 2016)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
- *Supporting Agency: Involving children in decision making. Information Sheet. Quality Area 1 National Quality Standard. Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (Oct 2016)*
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework – Resources for Professionals
- *Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 5 2014.*
- *The Child Care Act 2001 (Tas)*
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)
  The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

This policy is shared with the whole service community with opportunities to provide feedback/input.

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: June 2029

Educational Leader Responsibilities

The objective of the Educational Leader position is to provide pedagogical leadership and work in collaboration with educators to facilitate a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement.

The Educational leader has an influential role in inspiring, motivating, affirming, and challenging or extending the practice and pedagogy of educators. The role will mentor and coach colleagues in a professional manner, to maximise children's learning opportunities and develop exceeding quality educational programs.



Expectations to fulfil this role include:

- A thorough working knowledge and understanding of the relevant law and regulations that relate to service provision
- A robust knowledge and understanding of the National Quality Standards and the approved early learning frameworks
- Embed practice in the educational program to ensure consistency and intentionality as part of an ongoing process that is understood and implemented by all educators across all aspects of the program
- Build the capacity of the team to critically reflect on pedagogical practice to influence decision-making and drive continuous quality improvement
- Build the capacity of the team to have meaningful engagement and actively seek input, guidance and feedback from children, families and the service community to shape ongoing practice and foster a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging for all
- Providing expert advice and leadership in curriculum and pedagogy
- Develop agreed educational goals, practice, and behaviors in collaboration with the service team.
- Coach and mentor other educators to support a process of continuous inquiry, reflection and improvement in program development
- Lead and be part of reflective discussions about pedagogy and implementing the approved learning framework
- Support educators to implement integrated teaching and learning approaches
- Assist in the documentation of children's learning and how these assessments can inform program planning decision making

- Challenge existing practices with a focus on quality outcomes for children
- Develop, promote, and involve educators in creative initiatives to share best practice
- Support educators to actively encourage parental involvement in developing and implementing the curriculum of the service
- Actively develop and support positive working relationships with other early childhood professionals such as: Maternal and child health nurses and Early intervention specialists, local primary schools, and the broader community to support quality outcomes
- Link the service program to the community by working with other community services and groups such as, Aboriginal Elders
- Promote and commit to the continuity of learning within the service, and any other early learning programs the children may attend, and in their transition to school
- Play an active role in the teaching, learning and assessment quality assurance process as appropriate and when required
- Ensure compliance with established policies and procedures and that they continue to align with legislative and statutory requirements.
- Demonstrated ability to articulate and lead leisure-based philosophy that is distinct from a formal school pedagogy
- Coaching and mentoring skills that build confidence, critical thinking and reflective practices
- Proven understanding of team building and quality workplace culture
- Demonstrated ability to drive wellbeing and inclusion practices
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate and build partnerships that foster strong and equitable relationships
- Excellent social and emotional awareness, problem solving ability and autonomy.

Educational Leader appointment criteria

Selection Criteria for nomination

- Suitably qualified and experienced
- Strong educational leadership skills
- Demonstrated coaching and mentoring skills
- Knowledge of contemporary theories, pedagogy and the relevant learning frameworks
- A commitment to inquiry-based learning
- Demonstrated skill at supporting educators of varying abilities and learning styles
- Demonstrated high level knowledge and understanding of the National Quality Standards and related regulatory standards.