Reflecting on Practice
Team Meeting Package

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An important component of the National Quality Standard (NQS) and Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is the requirement for educators to engage in reflective practice and self assessment. The following 2 elements of the NQS relate specifically to reflective practice and self assessment:

**Element 1.2.3: Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups is regularly used to implement the program.**

**Element 7.2.3: An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place.**

In relation to the elements listed above, the challenge for leaders is to be able to assist and support educators to think about and discuss what they do, why they do it, how they do it, how they can continue to grow in their role and how their practices impact on children and families. The aim of this team meeting package is to provide a tool to assist Nominated Supervisors, Educational Leaders and Team Leaders engage team members in a process of reflection on practice.

The objective of these team meeting packages are for leaders to facilitate these meetings and empower their team about reflective practice and critical reflection.
The Package

What is the package?
This package contains material that leaders can use to help them implement a process which supports their team members to:

- Think about their practices
- Discuss ideas and differing perspectives
- Engage in continuous improvement
- Be an active part of decision making in the centre
- Be inspired and enthused about their work

The package contains a slide presentation, accompanying leader notes, materials for activities to use in team meetings and links to readings. The materials are designed to be used over the course of three team meetings.

Who is the package for?
This package is designed for leaders (Nominated Supervisors, Educational Leaders, team leaders) to use at team meetings. The material is suitable to be used with all educators regardless of their qualifications, experience or position in the centre.

It is hoped that after working through the material educators will understand the benefits of making reflective practice a part of their everyday practice. They will also understand the link between reflective practice, self assessment, the EYLF and the NQS.

How should the package be used?
The package outlines a process for leading team meetings and group discussions. The material is designed to be used over 3 team meetings. It contains:

- **Slides**: The package contains one set of slides for each team meeting. The slides contain information to stimulate discussion. If you do not have a slide projector, the slides can be printed out and used as hard copy.

- **Leader notes**: The notes contain background material to guide discussions and instructions for activities.

- **Questions to pose during the meeting**: These questions will help team members to think about and reflect on their practices.

- **Activities**: Embedded in the leader notes are instructions for activities that leaders can use during the meeting. The activities are designed to encourage educators to think, reflect and discuss.

However, it can be delivered in any way that suits the needs of your individual team. It can be delivered as a slide presentation, it can be printed should staff wish to take notes throughout the presentation, it can be emailed to staff and it can also be given to staff on a USB to return to whenever they wish. This ensures all learning styles can be catered for.
What is the content of the package?

The package will provide in depth information on reflective practice and critical reflection. It includes activities to help educators to become more confident in engaging in reflective practice and critical reflection as part of everyday practice.

The material in the package is divided into three team meetings. Below is a summary of the content for each meeting.

Team Meeting One: Introduction to reflective practice

This meeting contains an overview of reflective practice and stimulus for discussion about:
- Reflective practice in the centre context and links to Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
- Reflection in action, reflection on action and reflection for action
- An introduction to Kolb’s learning cycle
- Reflective thinking and writing skills

Team Meeting two: Introduction to critical reflection

This session contains information to stimulate discussion about:
- Differences between reflection and critical reflection
- How critical reflection assists educators in their pedagogy
- Critical reflection as part of everyday practice
- Relating critical reflection to NQS Quality Area 1 - Educational Program and Practice

Team Meeting three: Engaging in critical reflection

This session contains information to stimulate discussion about:
- Linking critical reflection to the EYLF
- Incorporating critical reflection into everyday practice
- Engaging in an activity to practice the process of critical reflection

Preparing for the meetings

In preparation for the meetings the leader should read through the Leader Notes for each team meeting session and familiarise themselves with the content. This helps the leader to be confident that they understand the content and know which resources to prepare ahead of time. To assist with preparation the leader can:
- Write additional prompts on the leader notes as reminders of how the information links to practice in the leader’s own centre or of extra points that the leader wants to add.
- Have all materials printed for the activities for each meeting.
- Prepare materials for the coloured hats activity in team meeting 3. If the centre does not have access to a colour printer, the hats can be printed on white paper and coloured in.
Introduction to Reflective Practice

Preamble
The content of the first team meeting is aimed at introducing team members to the concept of reflective practice. It also introduces concepts about reflection and learning put forward by Donald Schon and David Kolb.

Intended Meeting Outcomes
The aim of this meeting is for educators to:
- Consider and discuss what reflective practice means to them
- Think about the link between reflective practice and their own teaching
- Investigate ways to incorporate reflective practice into the everyday planning cycle

To prepare for the meeting Leaders should review:
- Slide Presentation: Team Meeting 1: Introduction to reflective practice and Leader Notes: Team Meeting 1: Introduction to reflective practice.
- NQS QA 1 – Educational program and practice
- Principles and Practices of the EYLF

Resources to have ready
- Large paper
- Marker pens
Content/Strategies

Purpose of slide
To introduce team members to the objectives of the meeting.

Points to emphasise
The first part of the team meeting package is designed to assist educators to think about what it means to engage in reflective practice and to understand the links with the EYLF.

Purpose of slides
- To gather team member’s ideas about reflective practice.
- To discuss reflective practice in the early childhood context and the role of educators in relation to reflective practice.
- To introduce Donald Schon’s ideas about reflective practice.

Discussion question
1. Ask the team members to share their thoughts in relation to the question ‘What does reflective practice mean to you?’
2. Write down the responses of the team members
3. Introduce Donald Schon’s concepts relating to reflective practice.
4. Compare the ideas put forward by team members to those of Donald Schon.

Points to emphasise:
Introduction to Donald Schon’s concepts
- Donald Schon is recognised in the field of reflective practice. He was a philosopher (1930-1987) who introduced the concept of ‘reflective practice inquiry’. This concept challenged teachers to question their practices in order to develop professional excellence.
- By challenging our prior understandings and experimenting with new ways of doing things we can grow, move forward and make positive change.
- Go to the following website for more information about Donald Schon and his ideas.


Resources/Slide

Objectives
- To discuss what it means to engage in reflective practice
- To make links between reflective practice and Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework

What is reflective practice?

The reflective practitioner

“He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation.”

(Schon, 1983 in Smith, 2001)

Reading
## Points to emphasise about reflective practice

- Reflective practice is the ability of a person to bring to a conscious level their thinking about an event, activity or the way in which they understand a practice and use it for self evaluation, new understandings and continuous improvement.
- Engaging in reflective practice enables educators to learn more about themselves and about teaching and to grow as a professional.
- Reflective practice is embedded in the EYLF, specifically it is listed as the 5th Principle - “Ongoing learning and reflective practice (EYLF, 2009 pg.13)”
- Reflective practice also forms part of Quality Area 1 of the NQS: ‘Educational Program and Practice’.
- Reflective practice is an ongoing process. The EYLF recognises the intention of reflective practice as gathering information and gaining insight that will inform and enrich decision -making about children’s learning (EYLF, 2009 pg 13).
- Reflective practice is a valuable method for:
  - Identifying past experiences and prior understandings
  - Exploring our thinking about the present moment
  - Foreseeing the next step

## Purpose of slide

- To have team members start to think about their actions and understandings that inform their actions.

## Discussion question

1. Ask team members to think about an encounter or interaction with a child that happened that day. Read out the question. What were the understandings, theories or ideas that influenced your response or actions?
2. Ask team members to write down their ideas and then to share with the group.

## Point to emphasise

Reflective practice is reliant on being able to identify why you do what you do. It is also important to be able to share understandings and discuss them with others.
Purpose of slide
- To discuss words that are often used in connection with reflective practice.
- To promote discussion about reflective practice being essential to growth and development as an educator.

Discussion question
1. Read out the words on the slide and ask team members the question ‘How might engaging in each of these practices contribute to reflective practice?’.
   - Personal reflection
   - Critical evaluation
   - Analysing thoughts, feelings and actions
   - Self-review
   - Self-awareness
   - Self-appraisal
   - Self-assessment
   - Intra-personal awareness

Points to emphasise
- Educators will come across the terms listed above in the course of their studies and professional reading. Some of the terms are also used in the EYLF and NQS. Sometimes they are used interchangeably. It is important to note that all relate to thinking about self. It is also important to consider the way in which they contribute to reflective practice.
- When we engage in reflective practice it is important to be able to consider many different viewpoints, acknowledge our own biases and emotions and look at situations from different perspectives.
- Sharing and debating our viewpoints and understandings with others helps us to see things clearly and to acknowledge and consider the emotions and biases that affect our actions and decisions.
# Reflecting on Practice

## Content/Strategies

### Purpose of slide

- To discuss the benefits of engaging in reflective practice with others.

### Discussion question

1. Read out the question on the slide. ‘Think back to the encounter or interaction that you have written down. Share and discuss the ideas, theories and understandings that influenced your response or actions. In what ways have your thoughts been clarified, challenged or developed as a result of the discussion?’

2. Ask for volunteers amongst the team to share their answer to the question.

### Points to emphasise

‘Reflective practice and professional learning is strengthened when undertaken with others.’ Assessment in the Early Years (2010) pg. 17. How does your centre work together to create a strong reflective culture? Consideration strategies such as:

- Creating opportunities for conversations between team members to discuss practice, such as at team meetings.
- Creating opportunities for meetings with families to collaborate and identify family relationships and factors that contribute to the child’s wellbeing.
- The benefits of engaging in reflective practice are:
  - Being deliberate in the decisions we make in regards to best practice and outcomes for children and families
  - Assisting in positive foundations for curriculum decisions. “Educators continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and develop learning communities” EYLF (2009) pg. 13
  - Supporting QA1- Educational Program and Practice, element 1.2.1 Each child’s learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation
  - Assisting in planning an effective program that is conducive of children’s developmental stage and requirements
  - Assisting in identifying strategies to build on our teaching practices.
# Content/Strategies

**Purpose of slide**
- To introduce the different situations in which the practitioners can engage in reflective practice. The information on this slide follows on from Schon’s ideas about reflective practice.

**Points to emphasise**
- **Reflection in action** – This involves thinking on our feet during day to day activities while you are in the moment, on the spot and engaged with children.
- **Reflection on action** – This involves reflecting after an event by exploring why we behaved in the way that we did and about the things that influenced the situation. (Relate this to the discussion that just took place about the question on the previous slide).
- **Reflection for action** – This is a proactive way of thinking about the future. For example: Thinking about the way in which the centre philosophy, your discussions with parents, your reflections on your own practices and your observations of children will influence your future planning.

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<td>To discuss David Kolb’s concept of a learning cycle and learning styles and how these relate to reflective practice and continuous improvement.</td>
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**Points to emphasise**
- Kolb’s concept is based on experiential learning styles and how we learn best at a practical level. That is, a person will engage new and concrete experiences followed by observation of and reflection on that experience.
- Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) analysis and the formation of conclusions which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.
- Kolb makes the point that it is important to engage in the whole cycle for learning to occur.


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**Reading**

### Purpose of slide
- To encourage team members to try out Kolb’s learning cycle.

### Discussion question
1. So far team members have thought about and discussed an event or encounter that happened during the day and the understandings that influenced their responses to the event. Team members should now think about the following questions:
   - What are the conclusions and new understandings that have resulted from the discussion?
   - How will these new understandings be used to make decisions about future situations, experiences and interactions with children?

### Conclusion
By engaging in reflective practice educators will become more confident to challenge past understandings and encourage new ideas and perspectives and to grow in their professional practice.

### Further learning
Watch the vignettes available on the following website and, in teams, discuss their significance to reflective practice:

Introduction to Critical Reflection

Preamble
The content of Team Meeting 2 builds on the ideas discussed during Team Meeting 1. In particular it attempts to have team members explore the idea of critical reflection as being the next step on from reflective practice.

Intended Meeting Outcomes
The aim of this meeting is for educators to:
- Discuss the difference between reflective practice and critical reflection
- Consider critical reflection within the context of the EYLF

To prepare for the meeting Leaders should review:
- Slide Presentation: Team Meeting 2: Introduction to critical reflection and Leader Notes: Team Meeting 2: Introduction to Critical Reflection.

Resources to have ready
- Large paper
- Marker pens
### Purpose of slide
- To introduce team members to the objectives of Team Meeting 2: Introduction to Critical Reflection.

### Points to emphasise
- The main objective of this session is to discuss the difference between reflective practice and critical reflection.

### Purpose of slide
- To explain critical reflection in the early childhood context and its relationship to the EYLF.
- To begin discussions about the way in which critical reflection builds on reflective practice.
- To build on the information discussed in Meeting 1.

### Points to emphasise
- The Early Years Learning Framework (2009) pg13 explains that ‘Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives’. When engaging in critical reflection, educators will be searching for ways to make positive change.
- Element 12.3 of the NQS states ‘Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program’.
- Both statements listed above suggest that critical reflection is more than reflecting on a situation simply to find out a child’s interest or affirm whether or not an activity was successful. It is about considering situations from many different perspectives with a view to changing our understanding and practice.

### Purpose of slide
- To consider the ‘professional attitude’ that leads to critical reflection.

### Points to emphasise
- Critical reflection is only ‘critical reflection’ if educators are prepared to consider view points different to their own, discuss their own values and biases and how they influence their practice and try out different ways of doing things.
### Purpose of slide
- To discuss the layers necessary to engage in critical reflection.

### Points to emphasise

**Note:** Refer back to and make links to the information by Donald Schon discussed in Team Meeting 1.

- **Experience and knowledge of others** – It is important not to rely only on your own existing knowledge and experience. Your colleagues will have different experiences and knowledge to draw on which will provide valuable insights.

- **Literature and theories relevant to my work** – It is important to think about the literature and theories that you use to inform your work. You should use these to help make sense of a situation.

- **Broader social and political circumstances** – It is important to consider the way in which social and political circumstances influence your work and decision making (such as social expectations, stereotypes and political agendas).

### Purpose of slide
- To engage in a process of critical reflection.

### Activity
1. Ask the team members to choose a scenario that is of current relevance to the centre. (Examples might be: planning for children’s transition to school, children’s involvement in planning for meal times, a sustainability project, use of the outdoor environment)

2. Ask team members to think about, discuss and critically reflect on the scenario using the following questions:
   - How do my own experiences and knowledge influence my understandings and actions?
   - How do your team members understand and view the situation?
   - What are the theories that you are applying to help you make sense of the situation?
   - What are the broader social and/or political issues that have influenced your actions?

3. As a result of the discussion write down conclusion, goals for the future, action plans.

**Note:** Ensure that you have documented the discussion including everyone’s input and the plan for action and change. Discussions such as these provide starting points for Quality Improvement Plans.
# Conclusion

Engaging in critical reflection is an ongoing process and a skill that takes time to learn. Remember it is not about focusing on finding things that are wrong – it is about developing a culture in the centre of continuously improving professional practice.
Reflection in action

Preamble
The content of Team Meeting 3 builds on the ideas discussed during Team Meetings 1 and 2. It is a very practical session which aims to have team members ‘try out’ a way of engaging in critical reflection.

Intended Meeting Outcomes
The aim of this meeting is for educators to:
- Build on the information discussed during meetings 1 and 2
- Try out the process of critical reflection

To prepare for the meeting Leaders should review:
- Slide Presentation: Team Meeting 3: Reflection in action and Leader Notes: Team Meeting 3: Reflection in action.

Resources to have ready
- Large paper
- Marker pens
- 6 thinking hats activity
### Purpose of slide
- To introduce staff to the team meeting and objective of the package.

### Points to emphasise
- Team meeting 3 is aimed at building on the information discussed during team meetings 1 and 2. In particular it is a practical session with activities aimed at ‘trying out’ a process for critical reflection.

### Purpose of slide
- The purpose of the slide is to inform staff of how reflective practice and critical reflection links with The Early Years Framework and the National Quality Standard. It particularly espouses with Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice and Standard 12 Educators and coordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.

### Points to emphasise
- Critical reflection needs to be occurring at a conscious level and it needs to form part of everyday practice.
- It is an important part of the EYLF and NQS and its ultimate purpose is to contribute to the best possible outcomes for children.
- It is important that every centre actively works towards a culture of critical reflection on practice.

### Strategies to do this are:
- **Creating time and space for reflection** – Create opportunities for discussion on a regular basis. Research has proved that processes for reflection are much more effective when shared with others. Remember that Educators have a responsibility to be reflective of their practice.
- **Mentoring and support** – Mentors challenge our habits and push us to think ‘outside the box’. Mentors can be colleagues or people within your network.
- **Using a lens of professional enquiry** – Think about critical reflection as a method of research and professional enquiry. That is researching your own practices and how they affect outcomes for children.
- **Intrinsic motivation** – Try to see critical reflection as empowering and motivating – helping you to better understand your role as an educator and to better understand the children you are working with.
# Purpose of slide
- To practice a process for engaging in critical reflection.
- To introduce staff to ‘Edward De Bono’s six hat model’.

# Points to emphasise
Six Thinking Hats is a system designed by Edward de Bono which describes a tool for group discussion and individual thinking involving six coloured hats. ‘Six Thinking Hats’ and the associated idea, parallel thinking, provide a means for groups to plan thinking processes in a detailed and cohesive way, and in doing so to think together more effectively. (de Bono, Edward (1985). *Six Thinking Hats: An Essential Approach to Business Management*).

The tool allows groups of people to think about a particular subject or problem and share ideas for solutions. This is done by metaphorically wearing the hats. Each hat represents something different and allows team members to speak freely without others passing judgment. It can be an empowering tool to use for continuous improvement. Each team member is to wear the same colour ‘hat at the same time’ and then talk amongst themselves about the same subject.

## Activity – Using the thinking hats to reflect on QA1 - Educational program and practice.
Reiterate to staff that the aim of this activity is to have staff participate in group discussions freely and then to assess and analyse information gathered.

1. Show the picture of each coloured hat and read the description of what each hat represents underneath (see the handouts provided).
2. Hold the hat up and read out the questions listed below. Ask staff to give honest answers to the below questions. The order of the hats to be held up are:
   - White
   - Red
   - Yellow
   - Black
   - Green
   - Blue
3. Hold up each hat for 5 minutes. Have butchers paper available for staff to write their answers.

   The team members are to pretend to be wearing the coloured hat you are holding up and to answer the following question from that perspective.

   **What is your current understanding of the EYLF Principle – Intentional Teaching, as listed on page 15 of the EYLF?**

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**Reading**
*Defining Edward De Bono’s 6 Thinking Hats.*

**Template for 6 thinking hats**
Content/Strategies
- Hold up the white hat and ask team members where they would obtain information on the facts about Intentional Teaching.
- Hold up the red hat and ask them how they feel about their current understanding of Intentional Teaching. (What feelings are conjured? Uncertainty? Confusion? Clarity? Confidence?)
- Hold up the yellow hat and ask for something positive about engaging in a process of Intentional teaching (relationships with children, cycle of programming?)
- Hold up the black hat and ask why they feel cautious or uncomfortable with the notion of Intentional Teaching.
- Hold up the green hat and ask team members to generate new ideas on how they could better engage in the practice of Intentional Teaching.
- Hold up the blue hat and ask team members to summarise their thoughts about Intentional Teaching.

4. At the end of the exercise ask team members how they felt during the exercise. Did they feel empowered knowing they were able to contribute or bring forward concerns without judgement?

5. Gather together the information collected and make into an action plan for continuous improvement.

Note: Intentional Teaching is only one topic that can be used for this exercise. You may choose to use another topic that is more current for your centre.

Purpose of slide
- To provide a summary of the team meeting package and the skills the educators can now use for critical reflection and continuous improvements.

Conclusion
Being consciously engaged in reflective practice during our day to day routines in our centre and having the ability to critically reflect on our current ideas and knowledge, will enable educators to
- Be more purposeful in their planning of the program
- Use different lens to think about their practice
- Grow their professional practice and make change that supports positive outcomes for children.
References and Resources


Reflecting on Practice Team Meeting Package

APPENDIX 1

6 Thinking Hats Activity

RED HAT

The red hat is associated with feelings, intuition and emotion. The red hat allows people to put forward feelings without justification or prejudice.
The green hat is for creative thinking and generating ideas. This is your creative thinking cap.
6 Thinking Hats Activity

YELLOW HAT

The yellow hat is for a positive view on things. It looks for benefits in a situation. This hat encourages a positive view even in people who are always critical.
6 Thinking Hats Activity

BLUE HAT

The blue hat is about process control. It is used for thinking about thinking. The blue hat asks for summaries, conclusions and decisions.
6 Thinking Hats Activity

BLACK HAT

The black hat relates to caution. It is used for critical judgement. Sometimes it is easy to overuse the black hat.
The white hat is about data and information. It is used to record information that is currently available and to identify further information that may be needed.