



# Responsive

Incorporating a willingness to be flexible, to ensure that learning is always child, context, content and discipline appropriate. To achieve this, educators will balance opportunities for structure and spontaneity, open-ended and specific tasks, and child-led and educator-led learning.

The cornerstone of responsive pedagogical practices is in the quality of the relationships that are developed between adults and young learners. A high quality relationship is characterised by the teacher's:

- sensitivity to each young learner's interests and preferred ways of working and interacting with others
- respect, concern and genuine interest in the young learner
- interactions using positive language and non-verbal communication (smiles, nods, affirmations) which indicates to a young learner that their contributions are valued
- commitment to actively listen each young learner's ideas, knowledge and feelings.

The following strategies are designed to encourage educators to think about responsiveness as a characteristic of pedagogical practice that encapsulates relational, social, cultural, and physical decision-making.

## Socially responsive practice

- Explicitly teach ways for participating in various group experiences by modelling expected behaviours and providing positive feedback to young learners.
- Model ways of adjusting interactional styles and behaviours to suit social situations (for example, communication with Elders in the community, parents and staff members)
- Demonstrate a consistent pattern of responses to children's behaviour.
- Set clear boundaries with a focus on positive young learners' management, 'When you helped Amy find a tissue...'
- Encourage young learners to demonstrate care and concern for one another.
- Interact purposefully with young learners in ways that encourage critical thinking, problem solving and invite their interest, 'Can you tell us how you solved that problem?' 'What strategies did you try?' 'I wonder what might happen if?'

## Culturally responsive practice

- Actively seek to learn more about the cultures of the young learners in your class through discussions and research with individuals and their families.

## Environmentally responsive practice

- Create regular opportunities for young learners to be physically active within the classroom.
- Utilise the outdoor environment as a regular learning space.
- Ensure that young learners have opportunities to learn through multisensory experiences.
- Provide a range of open-ended materials for young learners to access independently.
- Reflect the cultural identities of young learners in artefacts and resources included in the classroom environment, such as maps, flags, photographs, instruments.

*'Achieving a balance between play-based, practical and written tasks and a more equal distribution of time between child- and teacher-initiated activities was considered important for higher-order thinking, along with appropriate interaction in play-based activity on the part of the adults.'*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walsh, G., Sproule, L., McGuinness, C., Trew, K., Rafferty, H., & Sheehy, N. (2006). An appropriate curriculum for 4-5-year-old children in Northern Ireland: Comparing play-based and formal approaches. *Early Years*, 26(2), 201-221.



