

3. Exploring the decision-making process



... there is no written curriculum for Indigenous learning. Rather this is set by philosophies ... handed down from generation to generation ... the child lets the adult know what they need to learn ... time is of no consequence, gaining the skill, knowledge and understanding is. Special knowledge is given at the right time for the child to know.²⁰

The decision-making process described in *Foundations for Success* supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's learning through connected processes and relationships. Central to the process are children, families and communities, and the knowledge, languages, and ways of learning they bring as active participants in a kindergarten program.

Underpinned by the principles and perspectives outlined earlier in this document, educators support children's *belonging, being and becoming*. They make intentional, purposeful and thoughtful decisions that draw on their professional knowledge, including their in-depth knowledge of each child, in partnership with families, to guide planning for children's learning.

The model of curriculum decision-making is depicted as an ongoing cycle. It is dynamic and aligns:

- planned learning (the expected knowledge, skills and dispositions for children across the kindergarten year)
- pedagogy (the practices that promote this learning)
- documenting and reflecting for children's learning (making informed assessments to inform new learning).

The decision-making process can be described as everything educators do, in partnership with families and communities, to maximise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's wellbeing and successful learning and development. It also involves educators in critically thinking about what is offered and why.

All aspects of the process are interconnected, and collectively contribute to children's engagement with, and success in, learning as represented in the diagram opposite.

Each component of the process is explored in the following section.



Children,
families and
communities

Family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, spirituality and identity. As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child grows up, maintaining their connections to family and community forms the basis of the development of the child's identity as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, their cultural connectedness and their emerging spirituality.²¹

3.1 Children, families and communities

Educators implementing *Foundations for Success* understand that the active engagement of children, families and communities will be central to the teaching–learning process. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children's learning.²²

Each kindergarten program will emerge as children and families discuss and contribute to rules, boundaries and the conventions of everyday living, and policies are negotiated and considered side-by-side with families, Elders and community members.

Strong relationships among and between educators, children, families and communities will be critical to understanding and sharing each other's expectations and attitudes, and subsequently in building on the strength of each other's knowledge. When educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners. They will make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued.²³

The attitude of the educator in this process is crucial, and their effectiveness will depend on:

- an understanding that their practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning²⁴
- a willingness to share the learning and teaching process with children, their families and the community, while at the same time maintaining a clear learning focus
- recognition that their commitment to ongoing learning and reflection is critical to children's learning.



What knowledge, skills and dispositions will children be learning?

3.2 Planned learning

The planned learning of *Foundations for Success* is communicated across five learning areas that lead to achievement of the outcomes of the national EYLF:

<i>Foundations for Success</i> learning area	<i>Early Years Learning Framework</i> learning outcome
Being proud and strong	Children have a strong sense of identity
Being an active participant	Children connect with and contribute to their world
Being healthy and safe	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Being a learner	Children are confident and involved learners
Being a communicator	Children are effective communicators

The EYLF outcomes represent a national set of priorities for young children’s learning. They draw on conclusive international evidence to provide broad direction for children’s learning and development from birth to five years. They cover the most crucial aspects of learning relevant to the early childhood phase of life, and are known to significantly influence later learning and life chances.²⁵

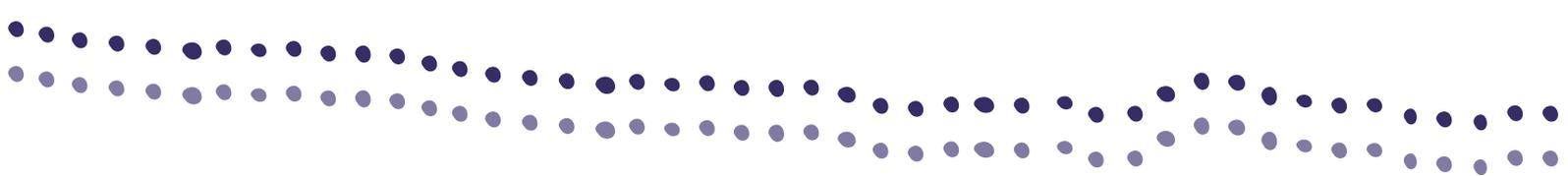
The planned learning in *Foundations for Success* specifically describes the expected knowledge, skills and dispositions for children across their Kindergarten Year.

Key components of this learning are expressed through 11 learning statements — the sub-elements of which are drawn from the sub-elements of the EYLF outcomes (see Appendix 2), and are described in detail in **Section 4 of this guideline**.

The planned learning reflects the holistic nature of young children’s learning. The knowledge, skills and dispositions developed in one learning area will often be used by children as they learn across the others. While described separately in this guideline, most learning experiences will integrate all five learning areas as demonstrated in the example *Bringing it all together* on pp. 32–33 of this guideline and made clear in the following statement from the EYLF:

*... educators ... see children’s learning as integrated and interconnected. They recognize the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning. They see learning as a social activity and value collaborative learning and community participation.*²⁶

Educators use their knowledge of the planned learning to guide intentional and spontaneous curriculum decisions that build on the rich cultural, linguistic and conceptual skills that children bring to their Kindergarten Year.



Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enter a kindergarten program with a strong sense of belonging to family and community. They learn and experience their culture and spirituality through their families – whether through knowledge, stories and songs from parents, grandparents, Elders or uncles and aunts; or through the everyday lived experience of shared values, meaning, language, custom, behaviour and ceremonies.²⁸

Being proud and strong

In this learning area, a kindergarten child:

- builds a knowledgeable and confident identity
- builds a sense of belief and confidence in themselves.

Being proud and strong supports the achievement of a child's **strong sense of identity**. Having security of personal and cultural identity provides children with an understanding of the world, a sense of where they belong and who they are, as well as shaping how they think and communicate. The development of a strong cultural identity is increasingly recognised as being important for health, development and wellbeing in childhood, adolescence and adult life.²⁷

Children's sense of belief in themselves is enhanced when educators understand that children may already be active members of the community, who are entitled to make decisions on their own behalf. Experiences in this learning area will involve children in developing pride and confidence in their cultural and social heritage. Teaching strategies will support the notion of the strong child who is an equal member of society with the right to act autonomously and make his or her own decisions.²⁹

By ensuring children experience many opportunities for success, educators help children to feel confident, build resilience in approaching new situations and cope with frustrations. This will ensure their healthy development and contribute to their success in life and learning.

Being an active participant

In this learning area, a kindergarten child:

- broadens their sense of belonging to groups and communities
- becomes increasingly independent and interdependent.

Being an active participant promotes the achievement of a child's **connection with and contribution to their world**.

As children move into a kindergarten program, the experiences and relationships they encounter will broaden their sense of belonging to many groups and communities. Over time, and with opportunity and support, the ways in which children connect, contribute and participate with others increase. Through a widening network of secure relationships, they become increasingly able to recognise and respect the feelings of others and interact positively with them. Educators assist children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork.³²

In broadening children's understanding of their world, educators provide opportunities for children to learn about similarities and differences, to respond to diversity with respect, and to learn about interdependence and learning to live together. An integrated, holistic approach to teaching and learning also focuses on connections to the natural world. Educators foster children's respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.³³

A significant feature shared by many Indigenous cultures is the belief that it is important, for the health of the entire community, to place children at the centre of decision-making within the family and wider community.³⁰ Emphasis is placed on children learning to share and have compassion for others; generosity and selflessness are seen as desirable behaviours.³¹



For young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, a positive sense of wellbeing is promoted in emotionally fulfilling environments, where responsive and respectful relationships and community connections are nurtured and valued. A culturally safe and caring environment will support children's health, wellbeing, and sense of belonging and security.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are expected to learn through observation and participation in daily extended family activities.³⁶ In addition, they may have experienced learning situations that are free from adult-child hierarchy.³⁷ It is through these eyes that they see and interpret their world.

Being healthy and safe

In this learning area, a kindergarten child:

- becomes strong in their emotional wellbeing
- becomes strong in their physical wellbeing.

Being healthy and safe contributes to a child's **strong sense of wellbeing**. Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs — the need for tenderness, affection and security. It includes happiness, effective social functioning, and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience.³⁴ A strong sense of wellbeing provides children with confidence and optimism, which maximises their learning potential.

Experiences in this learning area promote good health, nutrition and physical activity as integral to children's participation and engagement in learning. Time, space and encouragement is required for children to practice personal care skills, and to develop and challenge their physical capacities. Attention to fine and gross motor skills will provide children with the foundations for their growing independence and satisfaction at being able to do things for themselves.³⁵

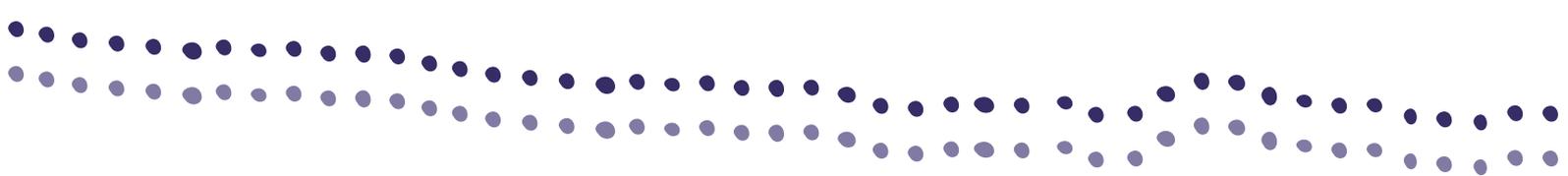
Being a learner

In this learning area, a kindergarten child:

- becomes a confident and involved knower and learner
- explores, investigates and connects with people, land, place, time and technology.

Being a learner contributes to a child's **confidence and involvement in learning**. Educators value and support the diverse ways children represent their learning and thinking. Experiences harness their curiosity and provide many opportunities to express ideas creatively through dance, music, movement, drama, the visual arts, and information and communication technologies.

Open-ended learning opportunities will support children to resource their own learning, find their own solutions, and transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another. Problem-solving, exploration and investigation are embedded within the environment, providing opportunities for children to invent their own cultural forms and symbols and explore unique and innovative approaches to understanding their worlds.



Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are generally proficient communicators who draw on various verbal and non-verbal expressions to convey their feelings and thoughts, and to be understood. These rich spoken languages, as well as their gestures and actions, underpin the development of literacy and numeracy concepts.

Being a communicator

In this learning area, a kindergarten child:

- explores and expands ways to use language
- engages with multiple forms of literacy that build bridges between family and community contexts and new learning
- engages with numeracy concepts that build bridges between family and community contexts and new learning.

Being a communicator embraces the diversity of languages, literacies and numeracies that a child brings to a kindergarten program to support their **effective communication**.

Experiences in this learning area build on the range of experiences with language, literacy and numeracy that children have with their families and communities. There are many opportunities to interact verbally and non-verbally with others, to engage with a range of texts, to explore and make meaning, and to begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work.

By interpreting the visual cues and symbols their cultural group has framed for them and expects them to know, children will be constantly ‘reading’ their world. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, children may be expected to ‘communicate appropriately within kinship systems, as well as being able to read and interpret local symbols of nature, in order to sustain and maintain family and culture’.³⁸ Visual cues may include the natural environment, seasonal cycles, stars and constellations, animals and their tracks, art, material culture and technology, dance and ritual. These early understandings will be closely tied to children’s developing literacy concepts.

Pattern, too, plays an important role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, many of which make sense and order of their world through kinship patterns and relationships. Since mathematics is the science of pattern³⁹, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are taught sophisticated kinship patterns from very early ages are well-placed to be able to generalise about numbers and operations that form the basis for Western mathematics and numeracy. Similarly, in learning to read and interpret the land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children develop an acute sense of spatial awareness; they have an intuitive feel for their surroundings and the objects in them. These skills can be highly developed.

By building on these experiences, educators support children’s awareness of the relationships between oral and visual representations, and ability to recognise patterns and relationships and the connection between them.

A summary of the planned learning is provided on pp. 38–39. More detailed information about the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions for each learning area is provided in Section 4 of this guideline.



Indigenous children usually like to feel in control of their choices, decisions and learning so they can explore, discover, practice and solve problems in their own way and time without adult interference unless needed. They usually watch very closely. Children's learning ... is individualised with encouragement, guidance, modelling and, at times, step-by-step teaching. The learners are decision-makers about what they want to learn and are given plenty of time, space, learning moments and modelling to do so.⁴⁰



*In what ways will my practices extend and enrich children's learning?
In what contexts will children learn?*

3.3 Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the practice of educators intended to promote children's learning and expand their understanding of the world. It is described in the EYLF as the: *holistic nature of early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.*⁴¹

Pedagogy also involves educators continually reflecting on their practices to inform culturally and linguistically responsive interactions and relevant learning experiences for children.

This guideline identifies four contexts that educators will use to extend and enrich children's learning, development and wellbeing:

- **play**
- **intentional teaching**
- **investigations and extended projects**
- **shared rituals.**

With the support of the practices outlined in the EYLF, educators ensure they integrate a rich repertoire of teaching and learning strategies across all four contexts, in both the inside and outside environments, at all times and with all children. They continually strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes.⁴²

Play

Play is a child's natural learning strategy. It is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- stimulates a sense of wellbeing.⁴³

As children experience a kindergarten program rich in play, they are practising the knowledge, skills and dispositions they require to be successful in life and learning. Play empowers them with the ability to be decision makers, communicators, thinkers, negotiators and collaborators. Through play, children develop thinking and problem-solving strategies. They extend their capabilities in oral languages, literacies and numeracies, and explore diverse ways to develop their imagination and creativity and symbolise their experiences. Children use play to:

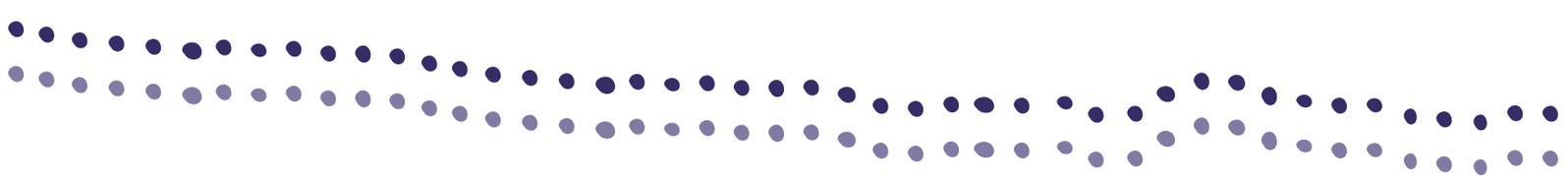
*... participate in their culture, to develop the literacy of their culture, to order the events in their lives and to share those events with others. Through play, children develop an understanding of their social worlds. They learn to trust, form attachments, share, negotiate, take turns and resolve conflict.*⁴⁴



In what ways will I promote learning through play?

Educators promote learning through play when they:

- provide multiple opportunities for children to discover, create, improvise and imagine
- pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing, as well as cognitive aspects of learning
- create welcoming and flexible physical and social learning environments
- respectfully enter children's play to stimulate their thinking and enrich their learning
- engage children in decision-making about their play and the resources, materials and spaces they use
- respect differences in play styles and guidance practices
- actively support the inclusion of all children, helping children to recognise when play is unfair, and offering constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.



In what ways will I make intentional teaching decisions?

Intentional teaching

Educators are crucial to children's success as learners, and their engagement in children's play will often turn a spontaneous moment into a learning opportunity. While children's everyday play experiences provide a fertile ground for learning, it is the engagement of active and responsive educators that supports children's deep and lasting understanding. Effective educators skillfully weave intentional teaching as they engage with children in their play to extend their ideas, ask questions and encourage complex thinking. They watch for what is unfolding and determine the support and challenge, both verbal and non-verbal, required to invite children into deeper learning, while at all times remaining clear about the intent of the learning.

It is important educators understand that a focus on intentional teaching does not preclude children's active involvement in the learning process, rather:

... educators plan for a balance of types of experiences including child-initiated, child-guided and adult-guided ... Educators take on intentional roles in child-guided experiences and children play active and important roles in adult-guided experiences. Each takes advantage of planned or spontaneous, unexpected learning opportunities.⁴⁵

Effective educators plan opportunities for intentional teaching as they move flexibly in and out of different roles, and draw on different strategies as the context changes.

For children learning SAE as an additional language, intentional teaching may require visual prompts and access to FL-speaking adults.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators are ideally placed to use their languages and cultural understanding to provide appropriate support and scaffolding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.⁴⁶

Educators promote learning through intentional teaching when they:

- make deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful curriculum decisions
- foster high-level thinking through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions
- use strategies such as modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, explaining and problem-solving to extend children's thinking and learning (see Appendix 3)
- provide opportunities for children to complete tasks independently and interdependently with a degree of autonomy
- provide a balance between child-led, child-initiated and educator-supported learning.



In what ways will I support children to try out their ideas and find answers to their questions?

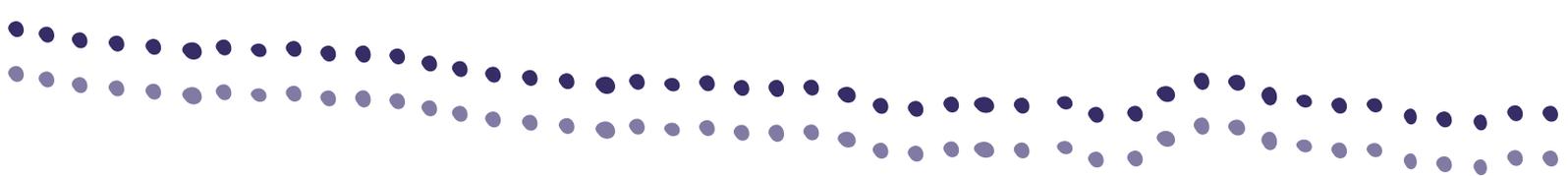
Investigations and extended projects

Investigations and extended projects provide opportunities for children to be competent and capable participants in their own learning. A quality kindergarten program provides many opportunities for children to generate and discuss ideas, make plans, research, brainstorm solutions to problems, and share reasons for their choices. Educators contribute to children's investigations and projects by asking questions, posing problems, developing ideas, challenging thinking, suggesting alternatives and involving children in decision-making. They help children to plan and follow through and to draw conclusions.

Children should be given significant time to pursue their ideas in increasingly complex ways with both peers and adults across all areas of a kindergarten program. The flexible arrangement of furniture and equipment together with open-ended materials encourage children to become flexible thinkers and investigators.⁴⁷ As projects evolve, educators can look for opportunities to extend them beyond the program by involving other children, families or the community.

Educators promote learning through investigations and extended projects when they:

- respond to children's expertise, cultural traditions and ways of knowing
- provide for long periods of uninterrupted play, and space for works-in-progress to be left out and revisited over days and even weeks
- introduce new and familiar materials, including digital technologies, to provoke interest and more complex and increasing abstract thinking
- invite children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions to the learning environment
- foster an appreciation of the natural environment and develop environmental awareness
- find opportunities for children to go into and contribute to their local community.



In what ways can I foster responsive relationships with children and their families?

What will determine the pace of the day?

Shared rituals

Shared rituals are those moments throughout the day when adults and children share warm and responsive interactions. A shared ritual could be the sharing of a book, an arrival or departure ritual, a sleep-time ritual, toileting times, or a meal. Shared rituals might involve an individual child, a small group of children or sometimes the whole group. Each shared ritual provides an opportunity to develop trusting relationships, and engage children in warm and responsive interactions with adults and other children. Shared rituals also provide opportunities for educators to foster relationships with families, particularly during arrival and departure times, to build bridges for children between the routines of home and a kindergarten program.

When incorporating shared rituals into a program, educators need to consider that children may have never slept on their own or been left to cry, or may, when not in a kindergarten program, choose when and where they can fall asleep.⁴⁸ Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are taught to be independent and self-sufficient from an early age. Some children are also responsible for other family members, including babies, siblings and cousins. This knowledge should determine approaches within a kindergarten program to the pace of the day and the expectations of children's competency in caring for themselves.

The concept of time in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures may be very different from Western experience. Educators should consider the significance of the 'right time' to do something. For example, the 'right time' for a child to sleep may be when they fall asleep. This differs from mainstream Western practices where adults usually establish routines for sleeping, eating and activity.⁴⁹ Additionally, in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, being safe may mean a person having time to make decisions when they are ready to do so, not when someone else says so.⁵⁰

Shared rituals in a kindergarten program become valuable opportunities for learning through sustained interactions, conversations and yarns. Yarning, in both FLs and SAE, will provide many opportunities for children to organise their thoughts into stories, as well as to listen to the stories of others. In addition, learning will be enhanced when culturally valued songs, music, dance, movement and physical activity are embedded within shared rituals. Through negotiation with children and their families, shared rituals will enhance children's learning by providing predictability and security to the day, while remaining flexible to diverse needs and contexts.

Educators promote learning through shared rituals when they:

- implement culturally sensitive and responsive routines and transitions that value and build on children's ways of *being, belonging and becoming*
- recognise the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and cross-cultural partnerships for learning
- empower children with choices about when and how they engage in particular experiences or interactions
- create fluid and peaceful transitions between experiences, for instance, from play to a shared meal time, in ways that are sensitive to cultures and respectful of children.





Documenting
and reflecting
for children's
learning

In what ways will I record evidence of children's learning?

3.4 Documenting and reflecting for children's learning

Documenting and reflecting refers to the ways educators gather evidence about children's learning. It is part of the process described in the EYLF as *Assessment for Learning*. When evidence of children's learning is documented, it forms the basis for individual records and planning, and can provide rich information about learning and teaching.⁵¹

To document and reflect for children's learning effectively, all members of the teaching team observe and listen to children to learn more about what children know, can do and understand. They gather rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress, and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings.⁵²

The planned learning outlined in **Section 4** of this guideline provides key reference points about the expected knowledge, skills and dispositions for children across their Kindergarten Year against which evidence can be gathered. Learning is not designed to be taught or ticked off one by one. Instead, educators gather rich pictures of children's learning as they participate in a kindergarten program.

Educators implementing the *Foundations for Success* guideline will create individual folios to record each child's learning journey. This will make the process of learning visible to children and their families, educators and other professionals. Each folio will be unique and reflect the process of learning that is particular to each child as they participate in a kindergarten program.

A folio might contain:

- observations and stories of children's learning
- photographic images, drawings or recordings
- samples or artifacts of children's ongoing projects, investigations and representations
- individual and collaborative works
- contributions from families.

A folio can take many shapes and forms and could be a display folder, loose-leaf folder or digital record. Regardless of its form, it is important that children maintain ownership of their own folio. This means that they contribute their ideas about what is to be included and have access to their folio at all times. Families may, from time to time, take the folio home to read or contribute comments and new information.

Over time, a folio will include a range of evidence of children's learning from which assessments can be made about their learning.



In what ways can children demonstrate their learning?

Making informed and consistent assessments

At particular points in time, educators will be making assessments about individual children’s developing knowledge, skills and dispositions to communicate and share with families and colleagues. These assessments focus on the ‘distance travelled’ by children across their Kindergarten Year. The EYLF advises:

*... such processes do not focus exclusively on the end points of children’s learning; they give equal consideration to the ‘distance-travelled’ by individual children and recognize and celebrate not only the giant leaps that children take in their learning but the small steps as well.*⁵³

In making assessments about children’s learning, educators refer to Documenting and Reflecting in **Section 4** of this guideline.

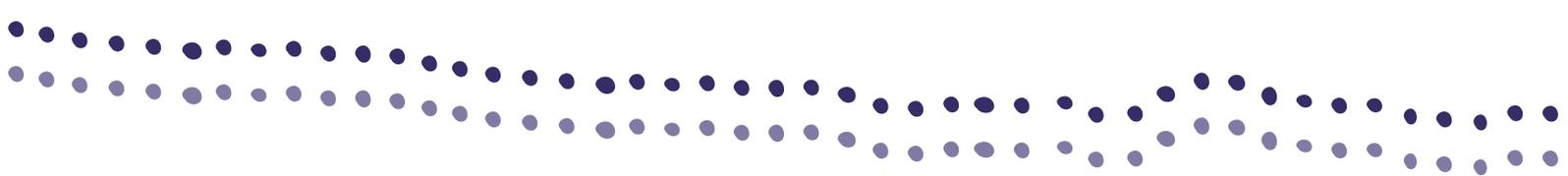
For each learning area, examples of children’s learning behavior are provided across three contexts.

In the familiar contexts of family and community	In new and unfamiliar contexts of kindergarten	In the familiar contexts of a culturally secure kindergarten
Learning that reflects the rich cultural, linguistic and conceptual skills children may bring to their Kindergarten Year	Learning children may demonstrate as they respond to new and unfamiliar situations across their Kindergarten Year	Learning children may demonstrate as they become confident and active participants across their Kindergarten Year

Educators use this information to:

- validate what children know and can do
- look for and see children’s learning in new ways
- build *learning bridges* from what children know and can do to new learning
- determine the level of individual support required to progress children’s learning
- engage families and other educators in conversations about children’s learning.

Each child’s learning journey may start at different points and continue along different pathways. Their learning is not always predictable and linear. At the end of the Kindergarten Year, individual children may demonstrate learning described in any of the contexts as described in the exemplar on the following page.



Following learning over time

How will I describe what children know, understand and can do?

To support their assessments educators focus on documenting significant aspects of learning gathered over time. This will provide the basis for making decisions about each child's future learning, and for sharing information with families about their child's progress. In the following exemplar educators follow aspects of a child's *confidence and resilience* from the learning area *Being proud and strong*.

Being proud and strong – confidence and resilience		
<p>10 May Braiden watched and listened attentively to a traditional story being told by an Elder. He mimicked the actions modelled by the Elder, who was pointing to each body part using traditional language names. He later participated in doing the actions of songs using traditional language, and attempted to sing the unfamiliar traditional words to the song. When asked to do corroboree, Braiden was reluctant to participate, however he followed instructions modelled using a combination of Yarrie Lingo and traditional language by the Elder, and watched quietly as the other children did the corroboree.</p> <p>Assessment Braiden is demonstrating his interest in, and understanding of, traditional aspects of his culture. He chooses to respond to directions non-verbally, following directions in both Yarrie Lingo and traditional language. He shows caution in tackling new tasks and watches carefully before imitating their actions.</p> <p>Focus for new learning – confidence to try new and challenging tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Braiden with time and space to tackle new tasks. • Build on Braiden's interest in mimicking and modelling actions through action rhymes and songs in Yarrie Lingo and SAE. • Continue to provide Braiden with opportunities to interact with Elders and community members. 	<p>17 July Braiden has been absent from kindergarten for a few days, and today he was asked which experience he would like to do after the group session had ended. He appeared undecided as he quickly glanced around at what the other children were doing and pointed to the blocks. He was asked if he wanted to play with the blocks with his cousin who was already in the block play area, and he nodded. Braiden was reluctant to talk about what he was going to make when asked. He nodded and went to collect some of the play wooden furniture near the block shelves.</p> <p>Assessment Braiden demonstrates that in unfamiliar situations he requires adult direction and support in approaching tasks and exploring the kindergarten environment.</p> <p>Focus for new learning – confidence in approaching tasks, people and situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support Braiden in his play by making suggestions that build on his ideas and interests, e.g. adding new resources to the block corner. • Seek opportunities to build Braiden's confidence in approaching tasks, people and situations through his friendship with his cousin. • Use the support of Indigenous educators to assist Braiden's attempts to become part of the group. 	<p>21 September Braiden played at the play dough with a small group of children. He appeared happy as he laughed at jokes with his peers and said that he was 'Dad' and the others were the 'sister' or 'brother'. Braiden decided he wanted to make a birthday cake as part of the negotiated play planning for the 'class party', so he collected a plate and some craft sticks for the cake. He molded the dough onto the plate and stuck the sticks into it. Using a combination of gesture and SAE he said to the educator '<i>I made it for you. A birthday cake. Look all a candle on. I go roll it an' put it on 'ere an' den I go put all dem candle on.</i>'</p>  <p>Assessment Braiden shows he is confidently exploring the environment and engaging with others across a range of learning contexts. He initiates and contributes to play experiences, sharing with others how he completes tasks in Yarrie Lingo.</p> <p>Focus for new learning – enjoyment in sharing successes and achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for Braiden to share his successes with others, e.g. finding a place to display his creations or asking Braiden if he would like to take a photo using the digital camera to display or put into his folio. Scribe Braiden's words. • Continue to strengthen Braiden's use of FL and support his awareness of SAE as an additional language.



What new learning directions will I follow?

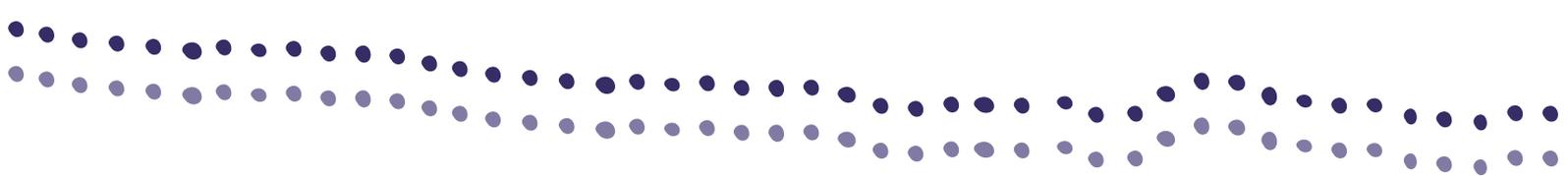
From this exemplar, it is possible to see how educators use the example learning behaviours provided on p. 43 to analyse their observations and make assessments about Braiden's learning.

In further reflecting on Braiden's learning, educators refer to the planned learning on p. 42 to identify focuses for new learning, and the intentional strategies that best build on and extend aspects of his *confidence and resilience*. At the same time, families and SAE- and FL-speaking adults can work together to plan opportunities that support his first language, as well as his awareness about and use of SAE.

When educators view learning in this way, children are supported to become two-way strong. Their learning in the context of family and community is not left behind or replaced, but built on in ways that do not compromise their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities.

There will be many other ways children demonstrate their learning. Educators will make provision for learning that is relevant to each child, their family and community.

For all children, educators make intentional, purposeful and thoughtful decisions that extend and enrich learning in relation to each learning area.



3.5 Supporting the transition to school

Transition as children move into the first year of school is a dynamic process of continuity and change. The process of transition occurs over time, beginning well before children start school, and extending to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and where educators recognise this sense of belonging.⁵⁴

The transition to school is a time of opportunity, aspiration, expectation and entitlement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and their educators. As children start school, they are enthusiastic learners, keen to build on and extend their learning. They hope that school will be an enjoyable place which supports their developing autonomy and their active engagement in learning.⁵⁵ Families, too, will aspire for their children to be happy and successful in school. They will have expectations that they are respected as partners in their children's education.

An effective transition will occur over time. It is a time when the roles of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will expand to include, not be replaced by, their journey beyond a kindergarten program and across school. This also means their identities will change.

Children will need to feel secure and confident that school is a place where people care about them and where they can succeed.⁵⁷ It is important to listen to their perspectives. They and their families will require support to manage changes in their physical surroundings, changes in social interactions and expectations, changes in the type and structure of learning environments, and changes in how they feel about themselves as learners.

By building relationships through conversations over time and planning collaboratively with others, educators support children to gradually understand expectations, interactions, routines and practices associated with new social and physical learning environments. They attend to the wellbeing of all involved, and support children, as well as their families and communities, to feel secure, valued and successful in school.

Planning for positive transitions involves collaboration. When educators and professionals across early childhood settings and schools work collaboratively with each other and with children, families and communities, everyone will develop a sense of belonging at school and a positive transition will be ensured.

A successful transition will:

- support children in continuing to shape their identities, while at the same time expanding their experiences as participants in different relationships and communities
- acknowledge and value children's entitlement to be actively involved in decisions and actions that affect them
- be respectful of, and responsive to, children's existing competencies, cultural heritage and histories⁵⁶
- involve respectful relationships and partnerships between families and educators that strengthen and support children's learning and development
- promote continuity of learning through connected curriculum, purposeful pedagogies and meaningful learning environments
- reflect policies and practices that are strength-based, inclusive and equitable.



What will I use to communicate children's learning?

Transition statement

As part of the transition process, educators from kindergarten settings and schools commit to sharing information about each child's knowledge, skills and dispositions so learning can build on foundations of earlier learning.⁵⁸ Towards the end of the year before the child starts school, a transition statement is created.

A transition statement is a summary of each child's learning across their Kindergarten Year with contributions from the kindergarten teacher, parents and child.

Based on information gathered throughout the year, each statement will:

- identify the child's developing knowledge, skills and dispositions in relation to each learning outcome
- summarise the 'distance travelled' across the Kindergarten Year
- describe the level of support required in new and unfamiliar situations
- include information contributed by the child
- communicate a family's knowledge about their child
- use positive plain language
- include information about the kindergarten service and relevant contact information (see example formats in Appendix 4).

Completing the transition statement in collaboration with others will provide an opportunity for children, families and educators to reflect on children's attainments and share responsibilities for future achievements. With the support of FL-speaking adults, information, concerns, expectations and aspirations can be shared both ways between educators and families.

A printed copy of the transition statement is to be made available to each child's family. Families are encouraged to pass a copy of the transition statement on to the school on entry into their child's Prep Year. For this reason, it may be necessary to provide families with two copies.

It is important that the statement supplement, not replace, the wide range of strategies educators implement in partnership with families and children to support the transition process.

All children will benefit from thoughtfully planned transitions to school which respond to their differences, similarities, strengths, interests and skills. Educators across different contexts bring professional knowledge and experience about children's learning and development. When this information is valued and shared, in collaboration with children and families, specific ways to support positive transitions for all children can be identified.

Successful transitions require collaboration from and with everyone involved. The aim is for all involved to feel that they belong to the process and belong in the school.

Bringing it all together

Children’s learning is integrated and interconnected — the knowledge, skills and dispositions developed in one learning area will often be used by children as they learn across the others. Using the decision-making process outlined in this guideline, educators make intentional, purposeful and thoughtful decisions that draw on their professional knowledge, including their in-depth knowledge of each child, in partnership with families, to guide planning for children’s learning as demonstrated in the following example.



Being proud and strong *Confidence and resilience*

- confidence to share experiences

Being a learner

Involvement in learning

- making simple comparisons ‘em too fat ... I can’t carry m’
- experimenting with ways to represent ideas in imaginative play

Investigating environments

- labelling natural phenomena and living things in FL and SAE — ‘elephant e big’

Story of learning: Wednesday 3 April – Badu Island

Allan chooses to spend most of his time in the sandpit during outside play. He has learnt how to use the digger to move sand around and make roads. He has been doing this most of the term. He seems interested in discovering how he can use sand in different ways. Miss Julia was visiting pre-Prep today and decided to model other ways you can manipulate sand.

A small group of children, including Allan, began helping Miss Julia make turtles and shark sculptures out of the sand. Later, during outdoor play, Mr Michael noticed Allan sitting on a digger truck in the sandpit. Mr Michael approached the sandpit and began playing in the sand. He asked Allan if he could tell him what an elephant looked like so that he could make one out of sand.

Allan said **‘elephant e big’**. Michael responded ‘Yes elephants are very big so I will need to make a big body with the sand ... what else do elephants have ...’. **‘em got long nose’**... Michael talked with Allan about how an elephant has a trunk and that it is long and what an elephant uses a trunk for. Allan said **‘em got big thangela’**. Michael said ‘Wow! You do know a lot about elephants. I wonder why they have got such big ears’. Allan stated that **‘em too fat ... I cant carry m’**. During this conversation, Jaynard came over and watched and listened.

Michael asked Allan if he had seen elephants on Badu and Allan said **‘no but I bin see m on tv and I bin look m in book’**. He then made a noise like an elephant and Jaynard began doing this as well. They ran off together pretending to be elephants.

Being a communicator

Oral language

- responding verbally in FL to simple questions

Literacy

- demonstrating interest in familiar texts ‘no but I bin see m on tv and I bin look m in book’

Numeracy

- recognising some comparative language, i.e. ‘elephant e big’, ‘em got long nose’

Being healthy and safe

Safety and security

- participating happily and confidently within the environment

Physical activity

- demonstrating agility, strength, flexibility, control, balance and coordination of their body in space

Being an active participant

Listening and negotiation

- respecting the ideas of others

Positive relationships

- taking turns, waiting, listening and joining in with others



*What learning opportunities do I see?
What is my intent?*

Planning for children's learning:

Suggestions for extending and enriching learning include, for example:

- spontaneous songs and rhymes, e.g. *'Five grey elephants balancing'*. (**numeracy – number concepts**)
- translation through FL-speaking educators or family and community members. (**language – awareness of SAE**)
- providing props or making with children, e.g. trunks out of stockings, big paper ears stapled to elastic to wear on heads. Asking children for their ideas – *I wonder what we need to make a trunk?* (**involvement in learning**) Do all children know about elephants?
- revisiting the question *Are there elephants on Badu?* with all children – what animals do we have? Label in SAE and FL (with FL-speaking adult) (**oral language**). Using visuals to support understanding. Ask children how we can find out more – research using computers (**investigating environments**)
- contextualising songs to include Badu animal names – *'Five green turtles swimming'* – include children's ideas. (**literacy**) Invite families to contribute local knowledge (**identity and belonging**).
- revisiting Allan's idea about noises animals make with all children, e.g. *'Remember when ...'* (**involvement in learning**)
- including books, pictures or models of elephants next to painting easels or clay table – provide children with repeated opportunities to revisit and refine their artistic representations (**investigating environments**)
- drawing children's attention to the shape of digger truck and shape of elephant's trunk. Could the digger become an elephant? (**numeracy – measurement concepts long, longer, bigger, heavy**) Educators add complexity to children's thinking
- extending interest in sand play by incorporating sand sculpting. Mixing plaster with sand allows it to be molded and set and then it can be carved. Make moulds in the sandpit and fill them with plaster, like the elephant's footprint or their own
- do the children know that elephants can swim? What other animals swim? (**investigating environments**)
- do the children know about the story – *Horton Hears a Who!* What other stories about elephants/other animals could we share? What are the children's ideas? (**literacy**).

