

Report on the Outcomes Project 2010–2011

Shining a light on children's learning

March 2012

A report produced by the Outcomes Project Consortium •



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

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Appreciation and acknowledgment is extended to all the early childhood professionals who participated in the pilot Outcomes Project 2010–2011

Early childhood professionals from the following services

Birth-to-three group

Baw Baw Shire Family Day Care, Warragul (Family day care)
City of Ballarat Playgroups, Ballarat (Supported playgroup)
City of Greater Dandenong Maternal and Child Health, Dandenong (Maternal and child health)
City of Greater Dandenong Maternal and Child Health, Noble Park (Maternal and child health)
Cobaw Family Day Care, Woodend (Family day care)
Geelong Children's Centre, Geelong (Long day care)
Knox City Council, Maternal and Child Health, Wantirna (Maternal and child health)
La Trobe University Community Children's Centre, Melbourne (Long day care)
Melton Shire Council Playgroup and Children's Resources Officer, Melton (Supported playgroup)
Mission Australia Early Learning Services, Springvale South, Keysborough (Family day care)
Tree House Child Care Centre, St Kilda (Long day care)
Uniting Care Moreland Hall, Moreland (Supported playgroup)

Birth-to-eight group

Bayside Christian College, Langwarrin South (Primary school)
Bestchance Child Family Care, Glen Waverley (Long day care)
Bundoora Preschool, Bundoora (Kindergarten)
Castlemaine Childcare Co-Operative, Castlemaine (Long day care)
Coolaroo South Primary School and Kindergarten, Coolaroo (Primary school and kindergarten)
Girrabanya Children's Centre, Ballarat (Long day care)
Yarrunga Primary School, Wangaratta (Primary school)
Monash Special Developmental School, Wheelers Hill (Primary school)
Moyhu and District Pre-school, Moyhu (Kindergarten)
Murray Road Kindergarten, Newborough (Kindergarten)
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School Wangaratta (Primary school)
Park Lane Kindergarten, Traralgon (Kindergarten)
Ringwood Heights OSHC, Ringwood (Out of school hours care)
Springvale Service for Children, Springvale (Long day care)
St Columba's Day Kindergarten, Balwyn (Kindergarten)
St Lawrence School, Derrimut (Primary school)
Zubees Pty Ltd, Rowville (Out of school hours care)

Leadership group

Barmah Outreach Kindergarten, Barmah (Kindergarten)
Barwon Specialist Children's Services Team, Geelong (Early intervention)
Biala Peninsula Early Intervention Centre and Bentons Square Pre-School, Mornington (Kindergarten and early intervention)
City of Casey Family Day Care, Narre Warren (Family day care)
City of Greater Geelong Family Day Care Centre, Newtown (Family day care)
Cooinda Kindergarten, Boronia West (Kindergarten)
Fyans Park Primary School, Newtown (Primary school)
Hallam Gardens Kindergarten, Hallam (Kindergarten)

Hume City Council Family and Children's Services, Broadmeadows (Long day care)
Joseph Avenue Early Learning Centre, Moorabbin (Kindergarten)
Knox Gardens Preschool, Wantirna South (Kindergarten)
Montgomery Park Children's Centre, Essendon (Long day care)
Strathfieldsaye Primary School, Strathfieldsaye (Primary school)
St Thomas More's Primary School, Belgrave (Primary school)
Tree House Child Care, St Kilda (Kindergarten)
University of Melbourne Early Learning Centre, Abbotsford (Kindergarten)
Waubra Pre-School, Ballarat (Kindergarten)
Yarralea Children's Centre, Alphington (Kindergarten)
Yuille Park Community College, Wendouree (Primary school)

Particular thanks are extended to the Project leaders for their collaborative work in planning workshops and in work with Project participants.

Outcomes Project Consortium

Dr Jane Page	University of Melbourne (birth-to-eight and leadership groups)
Dr Kylie Smith	University of Melbourne (birth-to-eight and leadership groups)
Dr Estelle Irving	Holmesglen Institute of Education (birth-to-three group)
Anne Stonehouse AM	Early Childhood consultant (birth-to-three group)
Kerryn Lockett	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Carmel Phillips	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Colleen Watsford	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Mentors from the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Cassie Kotsanas, Merlyne Cruz, Katherine Wade and Audrey d'Souza.

Terminology

Throughout this report there are interchangeable terms used for the participants.

They are referred to as early childhood professionals as described in the VEYLDF. This term best captures the multidisciplinary composition of the groups.

The terms practitioner and participant are also used in this report.

The pilot Outcomes Project 2010-2011 is referred to as the Project throughout this report.

The Learning and Development Outcomes from the VEYLDF are referred to interchangeably in the document as the five Outcomes or the Outcomes.

The terms Project leaders and facilitators are used interchangeably throughout this report.

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Executive summary

The purpose of the Outcomes Report (the Report) is to provide a detailed summary of the pilot Outcomes Project 2010–2011 (the Project), a key implementation project for the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all Children from Birth-to-eight Years (VEYLDF).

The Report has been developed in a collaborative partnership with the VCAA Early Years Unit and the Project leaders (Outcomes Project Consortium):

- Dr Jane Page, University of Melbourne
- Dr Kylie Smith, University of Melbourne
- Dr Estelle Irving, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
- Ms Anne Stonehouse, AM, Consultant
- Kerry Lockett, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Carmel Phillips, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Colleen Watsford, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

The Report draws on findings from fifty early childhood professionals who participated in the Project and includes pre- and post-evaluation information. The Report also details the project leaders' views about the opportunities and challenges the Project presented for participants and the implications for implementation of the VEYLDF more broadly.

Recommendations from the Report will inform ongoing implementation of the VEYLDF.

Key messages, the narrative around evidence collection and findings from this Report will be communicated to early childhood professionals to support engagement with the VEYLDF and to improve Outcomes for children from birth to age eight. In addition, the findings from the Report will inform the Assessment for Learning and Development Project in 2012.

The purpose of the Project 2010–2011 was to use an inquiry-based model of professional learning with a range of early childhood professionals in the early years services (birth to eight years) to:

- consider what children are demonstrating in the five Learning and Development Outcomes from birth to eight years
- examine and analyse in depth the learning and development outcomes
- use a range of resources to support documentation and analysis of children's learning and development.

The Project was designed by the VCAA and the Project leaders and involved six one-day interactive workshops over a nine-month period, with mentoring support between workshops.

Throughout the course of the Project, participants documented and refined their understandings and skills in observing, documenting and analysing evidence of children's learning in the areas described by the five Outcomes. This process supported responsive relationships with children, families and with colleagues.

A draft tool with an accompanying prompt sheet was developed by the VCAA Early Years Unit and Project leaders to support collection of evidence in the five Outcome areas.

The draft tool was used by participants:

- in their settings between workshops
- with colleagues during Project workshops
- with project leaders in workshops in specific coaching sessions
- with mentors and project leaders between workshops.

Participants in the Project made a commitment to work together across service types and to share experiences, strengths and insights. Over time, individuals and the groups together developed new understandings about children's learning.

Key themes identified by Project participants

1. Changes and growth in professional confidence and capacity
 - Participants reported increased confidence in participating in the Project and in their understanding of the five Outcomes. This was directly reflected in their willingness to engage in written reflection and document evidence over time.
 - Participants reported that regular reflection with a mentor and focused discussions with Project leaders about the evidence in the five Outcomes led to new learning. As a result of these experiences, participants reported new knowledge, skills and confidence gained in observing, documenting and analysing children's learning.
 - Willingness to engage with and try different strategies emerged over time and confidence increased across the groups.
 - As workshops progressed, the level of discussion and debate expanded. There was evidence of deeper questioning and more listening within the groups.
 - There was an increased capacity for participants to critique and question each other's evidence and, at times, to embrace this evidence.
 - Participants reported an expanded view of children's learning and an improved ability to describe and identify the meaning of that learning.
2. Changes in documentation of children's learning
 - The focus of discussion was the importance of gathering evidence of children's learning that is specific, targeted and succinct. Participants reported that this generally required a complete reappraisal of current ways of recording documentation and an ongoing review of decisions about what is worth documenting.
 - While changes in documentation were identified, a constraint of all participants was time or lack of it. Participants described difficulty in finding time at work to explore the evidence and there were extensive discussions about making space and finding time.
 - Participants reviewed actions, with an expanded view of what this meant. For example, the actions arising from observing children's learning could include not only activities, but also further questioning, observing and discussion.
 - Participants reported that the draft tool was a useful instrument to focus attention on recording and analysing children's learning.
 - Participants reported that looking deeply into the content of the five Outcomes and questioning, interpreting and analysing, enriches and expands what they see as learning.
3. Becoming familiar with the idea of both seeing and responding to evidence of children's learning
 - Project leaders and participants described the time it takes to look beyond the headings of the five Outcomes and to go back, read, consider and discuss the text under the headings.
 - In considering observations, participants described the changes in thinking: from paying attention to 'what children are *doing*' to 'what children are *learning*'.
 - Applying the draft tool supported intentional analysis and impacted on intentional teaching.
 - Participants found that it was not immediately clear what analysis means – it is more than documenting what children demonstrate.
 - Project leaders talked about learning happening across the whole of the child's experience.
 - Participants focused on children's strengths, interests, personal styles and temperaments as important details to document.
 - It became clear in the process that supporting the learning of children under three is not well understood and requires specific attention.
 - Recognising evidence of young children's learning is subtle and tuning into children's learning requires ongoing reflection and discussion.

4. Developing communities of practice

- Participants described the rewards of working collaboratively with colleagues from a range of early years services.
- Participants and project leaders reported on the dynamic cross-professional work between participants from early childhood settings and those from the early years of school settings.
- The workshops themselves created multidisciplinary communities of practice. This created new awareness about the work of other early childhood professionals and developed and strengthened alliances across service types.
- Participants described an increased understanding of the power of using the planning cycle with children and families. As a result of this, participants described an increase in listening to children, a willingness to keep going back to the five Outcomes to consider the detail and the overlapping qualities across the five, and the focus on attention to children’s learning.
- The six workshops over a twelve-month period allowed participants to look deeply at the content of the five Outcomes, apply the draft tool and enrich and expand the examples of learning.

The Project drew on the expertise of policy makers, researchers and practitioners to provide evidence of children’s learning in the five Outcomes. It has provided a platform to highlight ways of supporting children’s learning and development.

The inclusion of a birth-to-three group in the Project provided a strong focus on working closely with parents to highlight the complexity of the learning, health and development of infants and toddlers.

The opportunity for Maternal and Child Health participants to build connections between the *Key Ages and Stages Framework* and the VEYLDF enriched their concepts of children’s learning.

The opportunities for cross-professional learning between the early childhood sector and the school sector demonstrated the importance of and potential for increasing practice that strengthens continuity of learning for children, with a particular focus on the Wellbeing and Identity Outcomes.

Section 1: Context and background

Context and background

The VEYLDF was released in November 2009 for state-wide implementation.

The VEYLDF is aligned with the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Belonging, Being & Becoming* and links to the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* in the early years of school (Prep, Year 1 and Year 2).

Support for the implementation of the VEYLDF is a partnership between the Early Childhood Strategy Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Early Years Unit, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

The implementation of the VEYLDF requires significant cultural change among early childhood professionals. This is occurring within two key reforms: the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform in early childhood and the development of an Australian Curriculum.

Implementation of the VEYLDF

Effective implementation of the VEYLDF within a period of national reform requires ownership and engagement by the sector. Early childhood professionals must have confidence in their own practice and must identify ways to build from their existing skill and knowledge base.

An independent trial and validation of the draft VEYLDF was undertaken between August and October 2009. The trial identified the elements necessary for successful implementation. It was identified that a staged implementation would be important in supporting early childhood professionals' work and commitment to the VEYLDF. It was perceived that a staged implementation would support progressive feedback on the implementation successes and challenges and would help support a culture of reflective practice.

A Project Charter was developed in 2010 to support effective implementation of the VEYLDF from 2010. The Project Charter is ongoing and is overseen by a Project Board with representatives from both DEECD and VCAA. The implementation of the VEYLDF as defined in the Project Charter will produce:

- improved outcomes for all Victorian children from birth to eight years of age
- improved practice by all early childhood professionals, particularly in the areas of collaborative, effective and reflective practice
- strengthened family and community awareness of the importance of the early childhood period for learning and development
- improved integration of practice by all early childhood professionals and common ways of working together and with families to advance children's learning and development, which will support an integrated early childhood service system
- improved understanding by families of how they can support children's learning and development at home and in the community
- strong and equal partnerships between all early childhood professionals.

These long-term implementation outcomes were used, in conjunction with the specific methodology, to plan the pilot *Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes Project 2010–2011* (the Project).

Section 2: Scope

The purpose of the Project was to use an inquiry-based model of professional learning with a range of early childhood professionals in the birth-to-eight-years period to:

- consider the learning children are demonstrating in the five Learning and Development Outcomes from birth-to-eight years
- examine and analyse in depth the Learning and Development Outcomes
- use a range of resources to support documentation and analysis of children’s learning and development.

Processes for participation

The nomination process for the Project was developed by the VCAA with input from DEECD regional staff in April–June 2010. The nomination process ensured professionals from a broad range of service types were involved. Regions were asked to provide nominations with a specific focus on professionals working with children aged birth-to-three years and their families.

Participants from the 2008–2009 Practitioner Advisory Group were invited to participate in recognition of their previous work in supporting the trial and validation of the VEYLDF and the emerging leadership that this provided to the Outcomes Project. These participants formed part of the leadership group.

A total of 59 participants across the three groups were invited to attend six one-day workshops facilitated by external providers. Three workshops were convened between July and November 2010 and three more between February and May 2011.

The timing of the workshops across a ten-month period was an important part of the methodology of the project. Participants had time to access mentor support throughout this period to support new practices and approaches to applying the outcomes.

Over the life of the Project there were changes in the composition of the groups. Nine participants withdrew because of work commitments and personal circumstances. A total of 50 participants completed the Project in May 2011.

Composition of the Project groups

Two groups (leadership and birth-to-eight) were facilitated by Dr Jane Page and Dr Kylie Smith from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

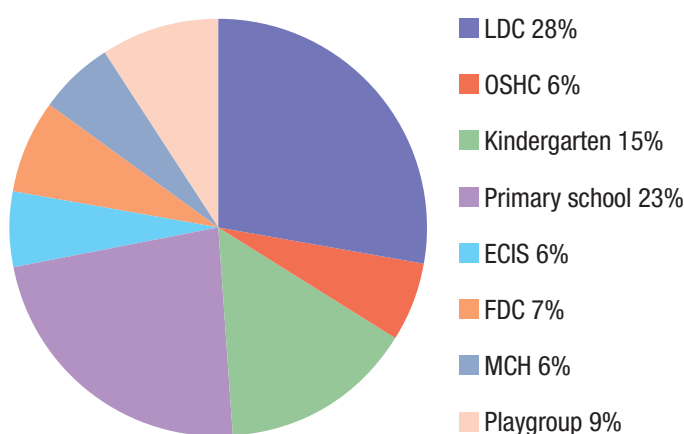
- 1. The Leadership Group** comprised 20 members including early childhood professionals from family day care, early childhood intervention, long day care, primary school, kindergarten, and local government.
- 2. The Birth-to-eight Group** comprised 18 members including early childhood professionals from long day care, kindergarten, primary school, early childhood intervention, family day care, and outside school hours care.

The third group was facilitated by Anne Stonehouse and Dr Estelle Irving, early childhood experts in the birth-to-three-years age group.

- 3. The Birth-to-three Group** comprised 12 members, including early childhood professionals from Maternal and Child Health, supported playgroups, long day care and family day care.

Figure 1: Project composition across the three groups

The following pie chart shows the breakdown of service types across the three groups, based on a total number of 50 participants who completed the project.



Section 3: Methodology

Methodology and participants

The Project was developed as a collaborative partnership with policy makers, researchers and practitioners. A practitioner inquiry model of professional learning was used to support collection of evidence of learning outcomes in the VEYLDF.

The VCAA and the Project leaders:

- designed six workshops to build evidence of individual children's learning, analysing and documenting
- used the five Learning and Development Outcomes as key reference points to explore individual children's pathways of learning
- provided both qualitative and quantitative data examples against the outcomes
- provided the opportunities to trial collaborative and multiple measures to investigate children's learning in the five Outcomes against program goals.

Project participants were supported to:

- identify what the child's learning looks like in each of the five Outcomes
- apply the Practice Principles from the VEYLDF to measure the effectiveness of learning opportunities against the five Outcomes
- identify children's perspectives of their own learning
- consider children's learning within the context of their families
- value culturally specific knowledge within families and communities.

Online pre- and post-test questionnaire and VCAA evaluation survey

All participants across the three groups completed an online questionnaire (Appendix 4) prior to the first workshop. This was developed by the University of Melbourne and provided base-line data from participants about familiarity with and use of the VEYLDF. Demographic detail was collected about age, experience, qualifications, position title and setting type. At the last workshop, all participants completed a VCAA evaluation survey (Appendix 5). Participants

in the birth-to-eight and leadership groups also completed an online post-questionnaire as part of the evaluation process.

Reflective journal

Project participants were encouraged to use a reflective journal for personal use as a tool to support exploration of the Outcomes and discussion within the workshops.

Development of a draft tool

The draft tool and prompt sheet were developed by the VCAA Early Years Unit and Project leaders. The key purpose of the draft tool was to support evidence collection in the five Outcome areas as part of the Project model of professional learning. The draft tool was developed as a result of the struggles participants experienced in documenting, analysing and planning for children's learning.

Based on evaluation feedback from participants, additional prompts have been added to encourage reflective practice and a more thorough examination of an experience or event. (Further information in Section 6, p. 24.)

Inquiry-based/action research

The Project was designed around core content, active learning processes, collective participation, mentoring and reflection over time. These approaches enabled participants to test and use new knowledge in their own context and to share these experiences with colleagues working across a broad range of professional areas. With the support of a mentor, participants were provided with contextual and practical opportunities to apply the content and learning from the workshops into their everyday work.

The value of emphasising context as an important 'mediator and moderator' of professional learning is critical in this change process and offers the opportunity for participants to develop 'ways of knowing' that are meaningful to their daily work (Desimone, 2009). This approach intersects with the VCAA's intention to support practitioners in a sustained way across several months to document and refine their understandings and skills. The range of skills includes observation, documentation and analysis of evidence of children's learning and development. Participants were supported through an action research cycle of problem formulation, planning action, taking action, data collection, critical reflection on data, critically

evaluating the action, reporting outcomes and further action planning as well as establishing structures that enable participants to move through this cycle in collaboration with others in order to reach new understandings (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998).

Inquiry-based/action research assumes that ‘powerful results are obtained when participants engage in processes designed to help them reflect on and integrate learning’ (Garston, 1997; Senge, 1990). It also enables people to focus on a problem or issue that is relevant to their own context and supports them to be critically reflective, to identify what they can plan and how they can act to create change. By being ongoing and relevant with an inbuilt structure of support, action research increases the sustainability of learning and change.

Action research structure

The action research structures assisted Project leaders to document the changing ways in which participants discussed and began to build evidence of children’s learning and of participants’ engagement with children, families and colleagues. This documentation took the form of notes of mentoring conversations and of group workshops, as well as analysis of pre- and post-test measures such as questionnaires. Project leaders facilitated group reflection on data and the evidence of children’s learning. They documented the outcomes of these reflections and plans for supporting children’s learning in workshop meeting notes and reports to the VCAA.

The Project leaders met with the VCAA between workshops to reflect, review and plan the workshops.

Role of mentors

Mentoring meetings and reflections in workshops embedded the inquiry approach throughout the Project. While the six workshops provided the frame for the Project and were the main contact between the mentors and participants, and also among participants, email and phone contact continued between workshops. These informal, individual contacts were generally initiated by participants, but on several occasions were made by a mentor – usually following up on a particular question or sample of use of the draft tool from that participant.

There were also opportunities for discussing participants’ documentation, analysis and plans. Mentors were also able to monitor the issues participants were facing and offer more specific support throughout the Project. Mentors were able to monitor the changes in perceptions of key issues over time across the life of the Project.

The long interval of more than three months between Workshops 3 and 4 led to a more structured approach to the collection of evidence in all groups in Workshops 4 and 5.

Anne Stonehouse and Dr Estelle Irving were mentors for participants in the birth-to-three group.

Dr Jane Page and Dr Kylie Smith were mentors for participants in the birth-to-eight group and the leadership group, along with colleagues from the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education: Cassie Kotsanas, Merlyne Cruz, Katherine Wade and Audrey d’Souza.

Structured interviews

The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education mentors developed their own structured scripts for the collection of mentor data.

A structured interview script developed by VCAA was used to document mentor discussions and provided the basis for the individual telephone interviews following workshop 4 and prior to workshop 5. These questions were designed to provide participants with structured feedback on how to refine their skills of observation and analysis. In these ways, mentors continued to provide ongoing and targeted support to individual participants and to help them to refine their evidence of children’s learning.

The range of early childhood professionals

The mix of work settings and professional backgrounds of those involved added richness to the workshops, discussions and the Outcomes Project as a whole. One area of difference among participants was frequency of contact with children and families, ranging from daily (in long day care services and primary schools), to regular weekly timetabled sessions (kindergarten and some child care centres), to weekly (in playgroups) to less frequent contact (Maternal and Child Health services, family day care, early childhood intervention services and out of school hours care services).

Section 4: Findings from birth-to-three group

Prior to the workshops the birth-to-three group completed a questionnaire that referred to knowledge of the VEYLDF, challenges in implementation and key areas of interest for the inquiry process. The Project leaders met with the VCAA between workshops to jointly review and plan all aspects of the Project.

A VCAA evaluation survey was completed by all participants at the last workshop.

This section draws on five sources of data:

- pre-program questionnaire (n=11) managed by the VCAA
- project leader/ mentor reflections following each workshop
- participant feedback offered in each workshop
- participant feedback to Project leaders between workshops
- VCAA evaluation survey undertaken on the completion of the project.

Overview of birth-to-three group data

Figure 2: Qualifications and experience

Years	Current position (n)	Current position (%)	EC profession (n)	EC profession (%)
Less than 2 years	3	28%	1	9%
2–5 years	4	36%	1	9%
5–10 years	2	18%	2	18%
10–20 years	2	18%	3	27%
More than 20 years		0%	4	37%

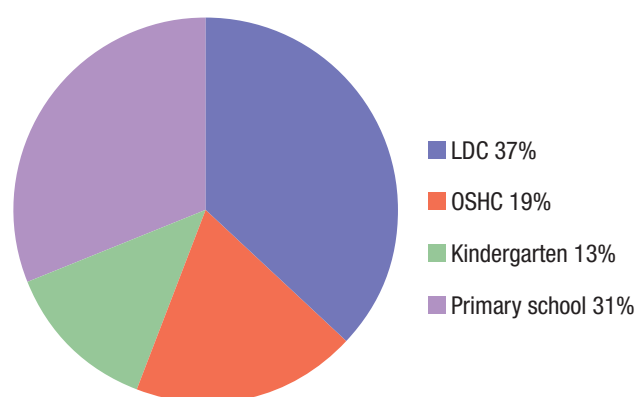
The majority of participants had worked in the fields of early years education and in health services for many years. The pre-program questionnaire data highlighted that while nine (82 per cent) of the participants had been in their current position for ten years or less, two (18 per cent), had been in the profession for more than ten years. This longevity in the field was evident in the types of qualifications held by participants, with six (55 per cent) having Diploma qualifications, one (nine per cent) having a Bachelor degree and four (36 per cent) having Registered Nursing/Midwifery and additional Graduate Diploma qualifications. In addition, one participant was undertaking study at Masters level.

Composition and profile of the group

At the outset of the workshops the group consisted of 18 participants. Five worked in playgroups, two were family day care field workers, six worked in long day care settings and three were Maternal and Child Health nurses. There was also diversity within service types – for example, within supported playgroup settings, one supported playgroup facilitator worked with mothers in prison while another ran playgroups for parents with mental illness and drug addiction.

The pie chart below profiles the breakdown of service types for the twelve participants who completed the Project.

Figure 3: The birth-to-three group



This diversity within the group was both an enormous strength and a significant challenge, but ultimately is considered one of the key contributors to the overall success of the Project. An identified achievement was the bringing together of a range of professionals from diverse services and settings, including services that have not traditionally been regarded as having a focus on learning outcomes for young children.

The professional and workplace diversity was mirrored in other aspects of the group, both at the outset and as it progressed. These included differences in qualification levels, familiarity with the VEYLDF,

varied experience of professional contact with children and their families and capacity and confidence to contribute to the Project.

During the course of the Project some changes to the composition of the group occurred.

In most cases, where one participant left, another was recruited from the same professional work setting/service, so the diversity was maintained. Eleven of the remaining twelve participants attended the final workshop. While attrition was an issue, a core group remained throughout the duration of the Project. This was particularly pleasing, and indicates the commitment of many participants, who faced a range of personal and work-related issues throughout the Project.

Role of facilitators

Anne Stonehouse and Dr Estelle Irving co-facilitated the birth-to-three group and participants were assigned to one of the two facilitators as a specific mentor. This arrangement provided individual ongoing support to participants in the form of emails, phone calls and, in a couple of instances, face-to-face workplace visits. Mentors were able to develop deeper and more informed relationships with their assigned participants and also supported links between participants, thereby strengthening relationships within the group.

Workshops

Six one-day workshops occurred between July 2010 and May 2011. While the overarching aims of the Project were recognising, documenting and supporting children's learning and development, the workshops developed and evolved in response to issues, questions and directions that emerged as the Project progressed. This flexibility reflected the inquiry-based, collaborative approach employed throughout the Project.

An additional rationale for this approach was the evolving understanding and recognition of the common ground between different early childhood education and care professionals. The workshops provided opportunities for modelling and facilitating respectful relationships within and between professional groups.

Overview of the birth-to-three group

(A detailed description of birth-to-three group workshops 1–6 is provided at Appendix 1.)

Specifically, the foci for the work of this group were to:

- collect evidence of the many ways children birth to three demonstrate their learning in one or more of the five Outcome areas in the VEYLDF
- discover new evidence of learning
- develop ways to document, assess and analyse the learning
- work in partnerships with families and children
- use what is learned to inform planning and practice.

The group achieved all of the aims to varying degrees. An additional success in this group was the demonstrated value and rewards of working collaboratively. In this way, the Project serves as one model for how professionals from a variety of backgrounds, experience and settings can work together. The gains from this collaborative approach ranged from increased confidence and work satisfaction to an appreciation of work with children and with families in other early years settings.

Two responses illustrate the perceived value to the participants of being involved in this project and how it has influenced their work:

- *I'm enjoying my practice more than ever before. I thought my practice was good, but I've learned so much more now ... I'm having long conversations with parents about their children's learning, too. I'm focusing more on the children's learning, not just on my practice.* (Child care centre)
- *The focus on children's learning has been very helpful for supported playgroups. I am now conscious of focusing on children's joy and curiosity ...* (Supported playgroup)

Many participants talked about the value and pleasure of working collaboratively and sharing experiences with others in the group. The following two examples are representative of this:

- *The workshops themselves were so valuable. I felt clearer about what I was doing when I had conversations with others in the group. I learned so much from listening to others' stories.* (Child care centre)
- *The group sessions in the workshops were great – both powerful and profound to be able to talk about our work environments with others.* (Maternal and Child Health service)

Lessons learned from workshop activities

Particularly effective components included participant-led small group discussions, one-to-one discussions between participant and facilitator, and engaging the group in applying the headings in the draft tool to written vignettes of practice. Videoed vignettes would also be a very effective method for engaging participants in reflection on their experiences and knowledge.

Mentoring

Assigning each participant to one of the facilitators who functioned as a mentor was invaluable, in part because it encouraged ongoing communication and use of the draft tool between workshops.

Contextual differences

Surprisingly, the work setting context mattered relatively little in both gathering evidence of learning and using the draft tool. One difference, however, was that in supported playgroups and in Maternal and Child Health services, more of the learning episodes included parents and children together.

VCAA evaluation survey

A total of ten early childhood professionals completed the survey.

The majority were from long day care (40 per cent), with the remainder from family day care (20 per cent), playgroup (20 per cent) and Maternal and Child Health (20 per cent).

Sixty per cent of participants attended all six workshops and 40 per cent attended five workshops.

On a five-point scale of Very Useful to Not Useful At All, 80 per cent of participants in the birth-to-three group who completed the Project rated their involvement in the Outcomes Project as Very Useful, 10 per cent as Quite Useful and 10 per cent as Useful. No participants indicated their involvement in the Outcomes Project as being Rather Useful or Not Useful at All.

Contribution of the Project to practice change

All participants described a difference in their practice. They described the use of a reflective journal and the draft tool as useful resources to:

- see children's learning in different ways

- use the reflective questions in the draft tool when observing, documenting and analysing
- seek out further information from the children themselves
- be more mindful of discussions with parents and children – reminders to wait for responses and listen more acutely.

I look more deeply into where the child might be coming from, what else is impacting on this child that is either assisting or getting in the way of their learning. At times we are constrained by the medical model which does not encourage you to look outside the square. (Maternal and Child Health service)

I now reflect on how children learn and I am more curious and joyous about children's learning, behaviour, intentions and conversations. (Long day care)

Contribution of the Project to early childhood professionals' work with families, children, colleagues and community

In relation to families

Participants described having different conversations with families; documenting and discussing learning and developmental progress more than the acquisition of skills. Participants described being less focused on problems.

The Project has focused my conversations with parents – less on problems and more on noticing what their children are doing, saying, learning and sharing and how we can encourage learning through play. (Supported playgroup)

It has helped me notice and celebrate little things that I would previously have been unaware of and not tuned in to. (Supported playgroup)

Have changed the way I approach families with information about their children. (Room leader, children's centre)

Supporting families to see the connection between a physical milestone that they think is important (dressing self) and the child's emotional wellbeing (feeling competent and proud) – I find I am constantly communicating this important emotional and spiritual wellbeing with families and colleagues and how it marries with and supports these physical skills which are more obvious. (Long day care)

I find myself being less judgemental when families respond in certain ways. I also have been able to show more clearly their child's learning and share my enthusiasm with families. (Family day care)

In relation to children

Participants described having a clearer picture of pathways – and in documentation with very young children, described noting the emerging skills. Participants discussed their increased focus on intentional teaching and an awareness of entering into the play and being more confident in their role to extend children's ideas.

In relation to colleagues

I now have a better understanding of what is expected of me as a professional and feel I have a better knowledge of the VEYLDF which I can now confidently pass on to my colleagues. (Family day care)

In relation to the community

Participants described an increased awareness and commitment to connecting up with other professionals and services outside their service – and being aware of the importance of these connections in their work with families.

Participants described an increased awareness of the place of children within communities and the importance of making these connections to support children's learning

This has helped me to encourage parents to look at how programs in the community such as playgroup, child care, Mother Goose programs and library can play a significant role in the children's development prior to school. Less formal experiences help to progress to the more formal areas of education (Maternal and Child Health service)

Section 5: Findings from birth-to-eight and leadership groups

The participants in these two groups completed a pre-program questionnaire developed by the University of Melbourne. Participants in these groups had mentor support from Project leaders and researchers from the University of Melbourne.

This was followed up by a post-program questionnaire and the VCAA evaluation survey.

A key difference between the groups related to the mentor support. The birth-to-three group had group supervision/mentor support meetings within the workshops. This approach supported the particular group of participants.

There were different sources of data drawn on and different contexts in work across the three Project groups.

This section draws on six sources of data:

1. pre-program questionnaire (n=34) independently undertaken by University of Melbourne
2. Project leader reflections following each workshop
3. participant feedback offered in each workshop
4. mentor feedback
5. VCAA evaluation survey undertaken on the completion of the project
6. post-program questionnaire (n=12) independently undertaken by University of Melbourne.

Overview of birth-to-eight and leadership data

Figure 4: Qualifications and experience

Years	Current position (n)	Current position (%)	EC profession (n)	EC profession (%)
Less than 2 years	3	8.9%	0	0%
2–5 years	10	29.4%	3	8.9%
5–10 years	13	38.2%	4	11.8%
10–20 years	8	23.5%	6	17.6%
More than 20 years	0	0%	21	61.7%

The majority of participants had worked in early years education for many years. The pre-program questionnaire data indicated that while 26 (76 per cent) of the participants had been in their current position for ten years or less, 21 (62 per cent) had been in the profes-

sion for in excess of 20 years and five participants had between 30 and 43 years experience. The range of qualifications held by educators included 19 (56 per cent) with Diploma qualifications, 13 (38 per cent) with Bachelor degrees and two (six per cent) with Masters-level degrees. Eight participants had Graduate Diplomas in areas of specialisation (see Figure 4 below).

The data clearly demonstrate that the program content and design supported participants to achieve the key aims of the Project. Participants gained new knowledge, skills and confidence in observing, documenting and analysing evidence of children's learning. Participants provided comment that this had impacted on their daily practice with children, families, colleagues and the broader community. Participants also reported an increased understanding and engagement with the Frameworks. They valued having the opportunity to engage with professionals from a diverse range of services over a longer period of time. They demonstrated a willingness to engage in new practices within their services and with professionals in other services. They also noted many challenges and constraints that had impacted on their ability to integrate these new skills into their daily practice.

Composition and profile of groups

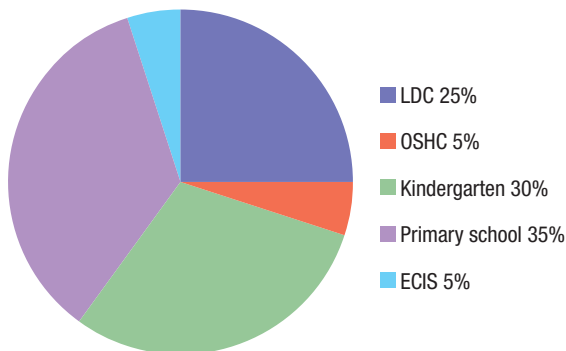
Birth-to-eight group

A diverse range of early years settings was represented in this group. It included participants from five long day care centres, one outside school hours care, six kindergartens, seven primary schools and one early intervention specialist school. Two participants left the project due to unforeseen circumstances.

The pie chart below profiles the service types represented.

This is based on the number (19) who completed the Project.

Figure 5: The birth-to-eight group

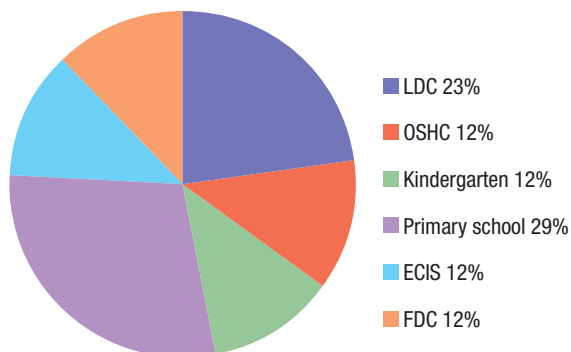


Leadership group

The leadership group included a total of 20 participants from a diverse range of settings, including four centre-based long day care, two outside school hours care, two family day care, five kindergartens, five primary schools and two early intervention specialist schools. All participants remained for the duration of the project.

The pie chart below profiles the service types represented and is based on the number (20) who completed the Project.

Figure 6: The leadership group



Pre-program questionnaire data

Thirty-four participants completed this questionnaire, 21 (62 per cent) of whom had primary responsibility for children's learning and development through direct contact with children. Their roles included kindergarten teachers, room leaders in long day care services and classroom teachers in schools. The remaining 13 (38 per cent) held leadership or advisory roles, including directors of centres, assistant principals of schools, field workers and support officers.

VCAA evaluation survey

Data from this survey indicated that the composition and profile of the groups contributed to the development of greater awareness and understanding of the impact of the VEYLDF across a diverse range of early years services. Participants in the birth-to-eight group provided the following comments on the value of being part of the project:

Great to have time to reflect on practice and talk to colleagues. As a primary school teacher it was enlightening to gain an understanding of various pre-school settings and challenges faced by them. (Primary school)

It is great to be able to share ideas, fears with others – to listen to other views. (Integrated children's centre)

Presenters' and colleagues' input provided new information, perspectives, opportunities for discussions and reflection. (Kindergarten service)

Participants in the leadership group noted the learning that occurs when professionals engage with other professionals from a diverse range of settings. The following comments were provided:

The ability to engage with educators across different sectors to share and learn so many aspects of the framework. (Family day care)

Great to hear varied perspectives as well as have a time to consider the VEYLDF/EYLF elements. Invaluable to engage with a diverse group of committed professionals. (Participant 14)

One participant made a comment on the benefit of interacting with other professionals working in different settings, when specific challenges could be raised and discussed within the group:

Excellent opportunity to interact with professionals in different areas of the early childhood sector. Have come away with a better understanding of challenges in other areas. Felt I was able to raise concerns/struggles of Family day care relating to the implementation of the VEYLDF. (Family day care)

The opportunity to learn from researchers and policy makers was also noted:

A great opportunity to debate and discuss, but also the benefit of the expertise provided by Melbourne University to provide a pathway in and around pedagogy and professional reflection!!! (Family day care)

To work with researchers and policy makers has been incredibly powerful in shifting and affirming my understandings of how children learn. It has created a stronger desire to learn more. (Primary school)

Building communities of practice

The pre-program questionnaire data indicated that 22 participants (63.6 per cent) identified the *purpose* of the VEYLDF as providing a common basis for the early childhood sector. It creates links between the different settings and schools. Participants also noted that the VEYLDF provided an opportunity to speak a common language across early years services. The profile and composition of the birth-to-eight and leadership groups aimed to use and build on this understanding of the VEYLDF. This was facilitated through opportunities for participants to interact with early childhood professionals across service types and to build communities of practice through collaborative learning.

Project leaders implemented a variety of strategies to achieve this aim, including:

- modelling engagement with each other and ideas in respectful and reflective ways
- providing participants with the time to come together to do small-group work focused on developing joint and shared definitions of learning outcomes
- meeting in small groups with mentors.

Usefulness of the Outcomes Project overall

VCAA evaluation survey data indicated that the broad range of workshop approaches adopted within the Project supported participants in different ways to collect evidence of children's learning. These approaches included use of inquiry questions, focus on mentoring in and between workshops, collaborative learning with colleagues, unpacking the concept of learning and development pathways, partnerships with Project leaders and background reading to workshops. These varied approaches collectively supported participants' understanding of the VEYLDF, and the analysis of evidence of children's learning within the Learning and Development Outcomes:

It gave me the opportunity to become more familiar with the framework and documenting children's learning more effectively. (Kindergarten service)

It has helped me to broaden my understanding of what constitutes 'evidence' of learning and made me aware of the value of being aware of the lens I am analysing evidence through. (Primary school)

It gave me the opportunity to explore the learning outcomes in more detail. It has helped me and my staff I work with to analyse what the children have learnt. (Child care centre)

It helped me to find successful ways of documenting learning and made me much more aware of all the indicators of specific learning in a given observation. It assisted me in detailed analysis of learning. The discussions and presentations have provided excellent learning experiences for me personally. (Kindergarten service)

It was great to discuss with others what they were finding with the project and to look at how evidence could be gathered in so many ways and how to document and assess children's learning through the framework. (Primary school)

Birth-to-eight group

Of the 72 per cent of project participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey, 54 per cent rated their involvement in the Outcomes Project as Very Useful and 46 per cent as Quite Useful on a five-point scale of Very Useful to Not Useful at All. No participants indicated their involvement in the Outcomes Project birth to eight as being Useful, Rather Useful or Not Useful at All.

Participants defined the usefulness in terms of an improved understanding of the VEYLDF, provision of readings to support learning, reflection with professional colleagues, broadening understanding of evidence of learning, connecting with other professionals and learning about the challenges faced by other professionals in the early years sector.

Leadership group

Of the 95 per cent of participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey, 74 per cent rated their involvement in the Outcomes Project as Very Useful and 26 per cent as Quite Useful. Participants defined the usefulness in terms of using inquiry-based approaches in their work, being provoked to reflect on their work, learning more about the issues faced across the early years sector, engaging more with the VEYLDF, reflecting on the strengths of children, reflecting more documentation and analysis of children's learning, strengthening practice, supporting and enhancing gaps in practice and exposure to contemporary research.

The majority of participants indicated that the new knowledge and skills they had gained had impacted on their daily practice. In response to a question in

the post-program questionnaire about how often they draw on the skills and knowledge gained through the program, 8.3 per cent stated Always, 58.3 per cent stated Very Often and 33.3 per cent stated Often. Indicative comments included:

By having a deeper vision of the Outcomes and children's learning in association to the Outcomes. (Participant 1)

Participation in the Project has added insight into my understanding of the Outcomes. I find the more I use them to plan and evaluate learning and the more I read other learning scenarios and how other professionals related it to the outcomes I am becoming more satisfied with my own capacity. (Participant 2)

Three participants reflected on how engagement with inquiry-based learning assisted their knowledge of the Outcomes:

Throughout my involvement I have focused on two main areas of the Learning Outcomes and I feel this work has assisted me to feel more comfortable with these areas and all they encompass and how they impact on and are impacted on by the other Outcomes. (Participant 3)

Working on the question as practical research provided understanding about how to document wellbeing. I have been able to support a family in understanding how their child is learning social and emotional skills as a result of the work I have done in this project. (Participant 5)

By meeting with other educators we have been able to explore further the inquiry-based approach to our planning. After developing individual questions and then implementing these in our daily work the focus was stronger as I was constantly examining my strategies as I kept my question in mind. By engaging in workshops and having the presenters 'challenge' our work it was a very supportive means of implementing changes to the methods we had previously used in our work. (Participant 8)

Factors outlined in relation to the usefulness of the Project aligned with expectations of the Project. When asked to describe the knowledge and skills they hoped to gain, 23 of the 29 respondents (79.3 per cent pre-program questionnaire) were directly seeking knowledge and skills about the VEYLDF. Of these, 15 were hoping to gain further understanding of the VEYLDF and eight were hoping to gain skills in its use. The remaining respondents (20.7 per cent) raised issues that were not related to the VEYLDF but more generally to skills and knowledge about being a better teacher and developing skills to support others. These

factors will be explored more fully in the next two sections of this document. As the following sections outline, the Project provided the participants with the concept, skills, practice and confidence to address these challenges.

Contribution of the Project to practice change

Birth-to-eight group

Of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey, 85 per cent believed that their practice had changed as a result of participating in the Outcomes Project and 15 per cent did not believe that their practice had changed.

The two participants who did not believe their practice had changed both noted that participating in the Project had supported them to become more reflective and questioning teachers. One participant stated, for example, that it had reinforced her belief in the relevance of her practices and had encouraged critical reflection on the effectiveness of teaching practices and whether planning was supporting children's learning. The second participant stated that being part of the Project had provided the time to reflect on and evaluate approaches to supporting children's learning. It also encouraged questioning how to improve practice.

Examples of how participants believed their practice had changed included:

- exploring different theoretical perspectives when analysing children's learning outcomes
- documenting different evidence of children's learning
- using the draft tool with colleagues to enhance discussions of what learning in the outcomes looks like for individual children
- sharing the language of the learning outcomes in the VEYLDF with families and employers
- exploring the interconnectedness of children's learning across the outcomes
- focusing on quality observations
- viewing the child more holistically
- being more critical of teaching practices
- taking more observations to explore children's learning in specific situations
- being more aware of the VEYLDF and focusing on the strengths of children's learning.

Leadership group

All participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that their practice had changed as a result of participating in the Outcomes Project.

Examples included:

- focusing more on the practice principles that underpin children's development
- providing clearer evidence of children's learning, giving confidence to support new practices
- feeling more positive about the VEYLDF and the ways in which children demonstrate their learning within the Outcomes
- adopting different methods of documenting learning to be more useful and meaningful examples of children's learning
- understanding how the VEYLDF relates to different services, developing personal and team awareness of the VEYLDF and its objectives
- understanding children's learning, being more reflective
- actively listening to children
- greater awareness of children's behaviours, attitudes and feelings as well as their skills
- working with colleagues to integrate the VEYLDF into a school setting, practices with families and children
- trialling the draft tool with colleagues, exploring what high expectations for children mean in specific contexts.

These examples highlight the ways in which participants developed confidence to enact the understandings gained through the Project. In the following section participants outline the ways in which they implemented their new knowledge and skills in and through their work with children, parents, colleagues and community. Key to these expressions is a keen commitment on the part of participants to integrate children's, families' and colleagues' perspectives into their planning. There is confidence to share and discuss their evidence of children's learning in order to develop stronger understanding of individual children.

Contribution of the Outcomes Project to early childhood professionals' work with children, families, colleagues and community

Birth-to-eight group

Of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey, 100 per cent believed that their involvement in the Project had influenced their work with children, families, colleagues and community.

In relation to children

Participants noted that their understanding of children had been broadened and through collection of evidence they had gained better knowledge of individual children. This had influenced their interactions with children. They also noted their analysis of children's learning had deepened. They now explored different avenues for achieving learning outcomes with children and could identify different pathways children take on their learning journeys. They had begun to integrate children's perspectives into their planning and focused more on children's learning. They acknowledged and valued the diverse ways in which children learn and became more aware of individual learning styles.

It has helped me to value and identify the different pathways that children take in their learning journeys. (Primary school)

In relation to families

Participants felt they shared specific evidence of children's learning with families and confirmed the importance of collaborating closely with families. They shared more with families about the VEYLDF and felt more confident to discuss children's learning with families.

In relation to community

Participants stated that they had shared the draft tool with students and recorded relevant information about community in the context section of the draft tool. They explored new ways to integrate the community into the learning program.

In relation to colleagues

Participants noted they had shared different methods of documenting and analysing evidence of children's learning with colleagues. They shared knowledge of the VEYLDF, ideas and readings and engaged in discussions about professional practice.

The other teachers in the centre are using the tool for recording children's learning and it has facilitated discussion about the Framework and the learning that is taking place in the kindergarten. (Kindergarten program)

Leadership group

All participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey indicated their involvement in the Project had influenced their work with children, families, colleagues and community.

In relation to children

Participants noted that they had refined their understanding of children's learning. Participation in the Project had provided increased direction on how to support colleagues in their work with children, including children's voices in their observations. They had begun to use a strengths-based approach to learning and to link evidence of children's learning to the Outcomes more fully. Daily teaching practices have stronger links to children's learning and they use different forms of documentation to capture children's learning. They are more confident in discussing children's learning.

I am able to stop and watch more now than I ever did before. My observation on children has developed incredibly to include more understanding of their learning and how I can support that learning. (Long day care)

In relation to families

Participants believed they used the language of the VEYLDF more in their interactions with parents and spoke more to parents about children's learning. They have become stronger advocates of learning through play with parents and listen more actively to parents to gain a better understanding of their children. They integrate the perspectives of the parents into planning.

In relation to community

Participants noted that they shared knowledge with other early childhood professionals and promoted the value of educators in the wider community. They also shared knowledge across services and were building partnerships with local schools.

In relation to colleagues

Participants noted that they had gained a new focus in their work with colleagues across the group and have begun mentoring colleagues in pedagogy, documentation and assessment. They have assessed what being, belonging and becoming means to colleagues and had more detailed discussions about the VEYLDF. Engagement, reflection and discussion between colleagues has increased.

I have used more language with parents to describe children's learning. I feel more confident with my knowledge when talking to staff. (Kindergarten program)

Section 6: Draft tool – capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of children's learning and development

Background

A draft tool was developed as a specific resource to support the process of evidence collection within the Project. This data collection draft tool was used by participants during the third workshop in November – December 2010 and until the sixth workshop and conclusion of the Project in June 2011.

A copy of the draft tool is provided, including a prompts section to support reflective thinking and action.

The draft tool is a process, not an end point. It facilitates recording children's learning, and thinking about the meaning of this learning. The draft tool informs both current practice and planning for future practice. It outlines a process of recording children's learning, thinking about its meaning and what the

professional can learn from it, as well as considering how it will inform current practice and plans for future practice.

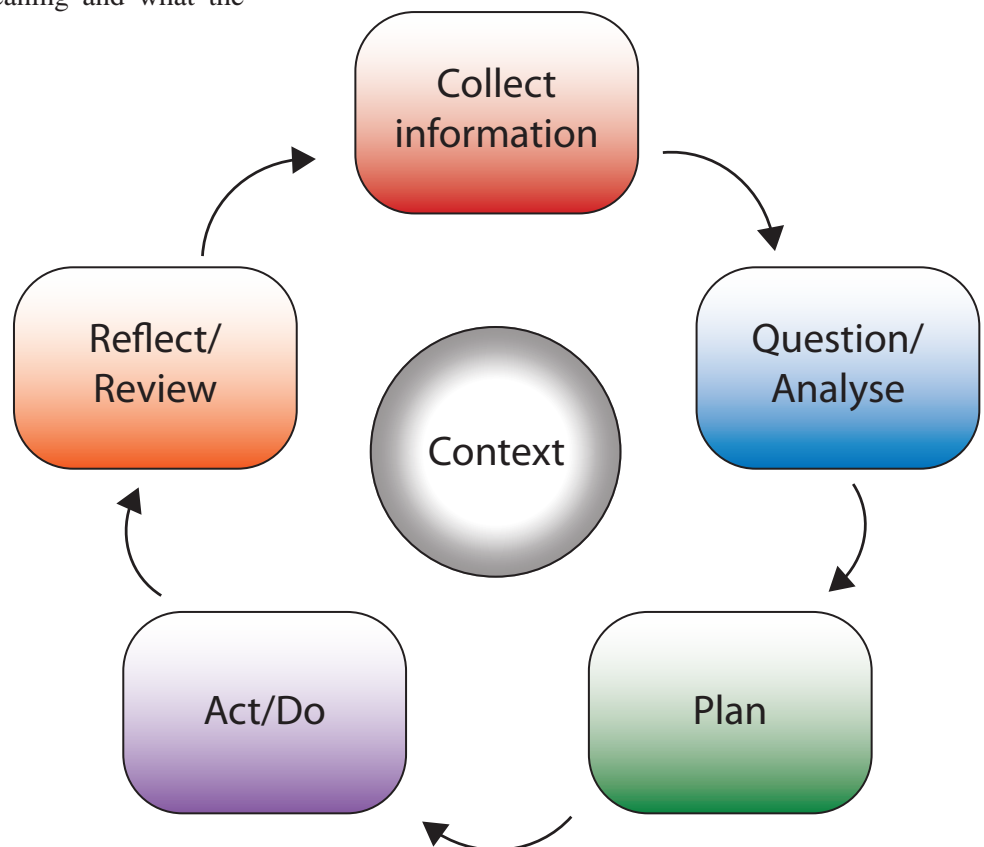
Questions were raised during the Project about calling it a draft tool, as that suggests that it must be used as it is, whereas it could be viewed as an approach that professionals might express in a number of ways: different words, different formats.

The draft tool can be used in a variety of ways to:

- assess individual children's learning
- inform planning for each child
- inform plans for groups
- share information with families.

The Project participants were asked to document and record evidence of children's learning, to analyse and interpret this evidence and to plan actions for children's learning. Participants used this tool and adapted it to collect their evidence throughout the Project. The tool is connected to the cycle of planning for children's learning. This planning cycle was developed by DEECD for the VEYLDF implementation professional learning: *Module 4: Assessment for Learning*. This is based on the planning cycle in the educators' guide to the EYLF.

Figure 7: The early years planning cycle



The early years planning cycle is adapted from the EYLF educators guide.

Introductory prompts section to support the use of the draft tool for documentation

The information was used by Project participants as an organiser to discuss documentation and analysis as part of evidence collection.

This is followed by the three columns for documentation of evidence of children's learning.

Early childhood professionals document children's behaviour	Early childhood professionals rethink, reshape or replace existing styles of documentation	Key points for consideration
<p>As early childhood professionals working collaboratively with families, we aim to build a detailed, strengths-based picture of each child over time by using the Learning and Development Outcomes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information that shows the pathways that a child or group of children takes as they demonstrate learning in all areas, including relationships, thinking and communication • create detailed snapshots of children's learning • document children's progress and share information and perspectives with families and other professionals • identify what the child's learning looks like in each of the Outcome areas: What does the child demonstrate? • collect information about interests, strengths and needs that can inform our practice • identify areas where a child may need additional support. <p>What can we document?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • efforts to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally • evidence of interests, strengths, talents, needs • evidence of temperament, 'personal style', qualities and dispositions • any behaviour. 	<p>The introduction of the VEYLDF provides an opportunity for all early childhood professionals to reconsider the purpose of documentation, and determine whether current types of documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are the most effective and efficient use of time and energy • include attention to the children's interactions, routines and relationships and all other important areas of learning and development • reflect the child's whole experience rather than focusing narrowly on their participation in traditional 'learning activities' • provide opportunities for discussion with families so that we can work together to identify, collect evidence and support the children's learning • lead to analysis and interpretation – making meaning – of what has been documented to inform planning and practice • support information sharing with families and other professionals as children transition within and between early childhood services • link practice to the Practice Principles and encourage reflection on why, how and what we do. 	<p>Documentation serves a purpose beyond providing evidence of individual children's learning. The evidence also informs planning for and practice with individual children as well as groups of children.</p> <p>Documentation helps us share information that is a foundation for partnerships and collaboration between families and professionals.</p> <p>The quality of documentation matters more than the quantity. More is not necessarily better. The meaning professionals make of what is documented is what informs planning and practice.</p> <p>Documentation is part of daily practice. While it is necessary to ensure that documentation includes all children and a range of situations, the most effective documentation comes from noting what is significant rather than having scheduled times for observing particular children.</p> <p>Keeping a record of children's behaviour, thinking, conversations and interactions helps early childhood professionals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make meaning of children's behaviour, thinking and language • act to further support children's learning and development • discuss children's learning and development with families and other professionals • provide a basis for critical reflection on our own practice – what we do and why we do it.

Why I think this behaviour or interaction is worth documenting

- this is the first time this has been observed
- this occurs frequently
- this is unexpected, surprising or unusual.

Documentation/record

What happened?

Information including:

- notes from observations of children's engagement, thinking or other behaviour
- evidence of children's interests, strengths, needs, style, temperament
- a piece of work the child produced
- a photo of an interaction or something the child created
- a conversation taped or shared
- a sequence of behaviours and interactions
- a single brief encounter
- some information or a story shared by a family member
- anecdotes related by another early childhood professional.

Context

Describe:

- the learning environment where this happened
- anything significant that happened before or after the documented behaviour occurred
- any information that will help to make meaning from what is documented.

Analysis and interpretation

What does this mean?

Step back and think about the meaning of what you noticed – record your analysis and interpretation.

Reflective questions that may help you interpret:

- Who/what can help me interpret this – for example the child, the family, other professionals, research evidence?
- What ideas, thoughts, experience or perspectives are behind my analysis and interpretation?
- What does this documentation tell me about this child's learning and development?
- How is this a pathway for learning?
- How does this observation link to one or more of the Learning Outcomes?

Context

Describe:

- the learning environment where this happened
- anything significant that happened before or after the documented behaviour occurred
- any information that will help to make meaning from what is documented.

Action

What intentional action can I take?

How will this documentation affect what I do with children and families?

Reflective questions:

- Are there some ways that I can use this information in my communication with the child and family?
- How will I adapt my plans and practice in:
 - my interactions with the child/children
 - my interactions with families
 - the way I set up the learning environment
 - the learning opportunities I encourage and extend
 - daily routines?

VCAA Early Years Outcomes Group

A draft tool for capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of the child/ren recorded by:

Child/Children's Name/s: _____

Date _____ Time _____

Documentation/Record	Analysis and interpretation	Action
<p>Context</p>		

Strengths of the draft tool for evidence collection

The strengths of the draft tool for evidence collection are in its use and adaptation. Participants identified a number of key features of the tool as they used it over time. In workshops, many participants stated that they found the tool to be a flexible instrument for focusing their attention to recording and analysing children's learning in a format that could be shared with other professionals and with families. Mentors reported similar feedback from participants in their interviews between workshops.

Promoting conversations with families: The participants highlighted the value of using the process indicated by the draft tool as a means of sharing information with families and encouraging two-way conversations about children's learning. One of its strengths is that it encourages sharing not only information about children's learning but also can help families to understand more about how they can work with professionals to support children's learning.

Building a picture: The draft tool is described as an effective way for professionals to build over time a picture of children's progress and a current complete statement or profile of their learning. This includes families' observations, analysis and interpretations. The use of the tool over time, and in robust discussions at workshops, challenged a belief of many of the participants; that when it comes to documentation, more is better. Through discussion, debate and practice, participants were more confident that unanalysed documentation isn't useful, no matter how much you have.

Section 7: Documentation of evidence of children's learning

Introduction

The draft tool was developed by the VCAA with the Project leaders to support collection of evidence. This section includes six evidence examples gathered by participants and two artefacts used by participants in adaptation of the draft tool.

All participants applied the draft tool throughout the Project and it was the key mechanism to look closely at analysis of documentation and the link with experiences to support children's learning.

Making children's learning and development more visible

Birth-to-three group

In the birth-to-three group, comments about the Action section of the draft tool indicated how far some participants had progressed since the tool was first introduced. Initially actions had been narrowly interpreted by many participants. Over the course of the Project a wider, more reflective understanding of actions emerged. This included:

- making further observations
- finding out more about what is happening – paying more explicit attention to what is actually going on
- monitoring one's own expectations and attitudes
- conversations with families – not just to get information but to tell them about something wonderful or significant a child has done, or to share a question
- sharing information with other professionals or asking them what they think might be the meaning behind an observation
- following up, checking back with the parent or child about the meaning of what was observed, or simply mentioning something to a child the next day as a reminder.

Example of evidence 1

Introduction

Birth-to-two-years room in a child care centre
Project participant: Cecilia
Age of child, Johnny: 23 months

Note: Cecilia has a pedagogical leadership role in her centre, which includes supporting other educators to engage with the VEYLD and critically reflect on their practice.

Documentation/record

Johnny's educator was concerned that he was biting and pushing other children. They have had to start shadowing him to ensure that he doesn't harm anyone.

Observing Johnny over a week, I noticed that he tended to leave alone the children who didn't react, targeting instead the children who did. I saw Johnny push a child who just stood up and moved away from him, and Johnny moved on and didn't follow. When he hit a child who cried loudly, Johnny followed the child, hit her again and walked away only when an educator intervened.

I also noted that Johnny had a very limited vocabulary for a child his age. I heard him say 'no' when he was being redirected to the sandpit, repeat the word 'stop' when an educator was talking to him, ask for 'more' during mealtimes and say 'bye bye' to an educator when he was going inside to bed.

I shared my observations with his educator and asked if this matched her own observations. She had not noticed that he left alone the children who did not react so vocally, but otherwise her observations were very similar to mine.

Analysis

Johnny seems to be interested in the reaction from the children and repeats his actions to get the reaction again.

It may be that because of his limited language he is attempting to interact and join in play in the only way he knows. Children's reactions may be interpreted by Johnny as positive

Continued over page

communication and engagement and so he continues to pursue it. Pushing and biting may also be his way of releasing energy or frustration, even excitement.

It is possible that something is happening away from child care that Johnny is reacting to – perhaps a new sibling or a parent away. These situations can evoke huge, overwhelming feelings that can be hard even for an adult to label and manage, much less a two-year-old!

Action

A conversation with his parents is a must. If catching them at drop-off is not convenient or appropriate I will suggest that the educator and I phone them at a time when we can concentrate on the conversation. We will begin by assuring them that Johnny is having a good day, add something that he has done that morning before addressing our concerns. We will ask if there is anything new or different at home and whether or not they have seen this behaviour.

We will explain what we have been doing about the behaviour and discuss some ideas about supporting Johnny.

We will reassure his parents that this kind of behaviour is typical for some toddlers.

We will offer Johnny lots of cause-and-effect experiences, including noisemakers and musical instruments that Johnny can bang, hit and get a noisy reaction. We will give lots of attention to these kinds of explorations and try to further engage him by extending his play with other resources, demonstrating other ways of using the instruments and using them for singing and movement.

We will:

- have conversations
- use familiar and favourite stories and songs for Johnny to practise using words
- talk about what Johnny is using/doing and encourage him to try using the words
- prompt Johnny to use the words that he already knows.

All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of any children, families or staff featured.

Birth-to-eight group

One hundred per cent of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in making children's learning and development more visible. Participants noted that the tool had assisted them to effectively document, analyse and reflect on children's learning and focus on actions for building on that learning. They stated that they had refined their observations and focused more on analysis than they had previously.

It has allowed me to reflect on my observations, to analyse and write down my planning of the program. In the past the analysing and future planning was not recorded effectively. (Participant 6)

Leadership group


Ninety per cent of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in making children's learning and development more visible. Five per cent did not believe it had been useful and five per cent did not answer the question. Participants who found the tool useful in this regard noted that it had assisted them to clearly write their evidence and have more precise analysis sections; write more effective transition statements; stop and think about analysis prior to planning; use a variety of tools to make the planning visible and to act on children's learning.

I use this tool to support planning. It makes me stop and analyse prior to planning – especially with colleagues. (Participant 6)

Example of evidence 2

Introduction

The following example took place in a four-year-olds preschool setting. Paula, the teacher, had been providing the children with many opportunities to engage with traditional and urban Koori culture. This example draws on an interaction between Paula and a child, Ollie, during a home visit. In this observation Ollie draws on learning from an earlier Koori workshop at the preschool and draws a picture of the Koori flag for Paula. When analysing this observation Paula was able to see that Ollie's learning was not limited to one outcome but rather was interconnected across three Learning Outcomes – Communication, Community and Learning. This assisted Paula to highlight the multi-dimensional and interconnected nature of Ollie's learning in the one observation. Paula colour-coded the different Learning Outcomes to distinguish them within the text.

Document and record	Analyse and interpret	Act
<p>Ollie: 'I'm going to do a Koori drawing.'</p>  <p>Ollie: 'Yes! I did it right! This is for you. You can take this home'.</p> <p>Context:</p> <p>This took place at a home visit when I was at child's home. It was a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere where I was made to feel extremely welcome. Ollie and his mother had made special Indian food for me and when I arrived I was presented with a lei and given a red spot on my forehead. They were both very eager to share their culture with me and Ollie took great delight in showing me around his home and we played together with his toys. When we were sitting at the table, he said: 'I'm going to do a Koori drawing'.</p> <p>He went out of the room and collected red, yellow and black Textas, came back into the room and drew a Koori flag. When he had finished he said: 'Yes! I did it right! This is for you. You can take this home'.</p> <p>He then did another drawing with the same colours and said: 'This is for you too. It's a map so you can get anywhere'.</p>	<p>This displays that Ollie has a knowledge of the colours and design of the Koori flag.</p> <p>I consider he wanted to share this with me and may have wanted me to take it home to share with my son who had presented a Koori art workshop to the children at the kindergarten a few days ago.</p> <p>Both Ollie and his mother had been present at the workshop and both had shown great interest and involvement.</p> <p>Children develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.</p> <p>Outcome 5: COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Children are effective communicators.</p> <p>Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.</p> <p>Outcome 2: COMMUNITY</p> <p>Children are connected with and contribute to their world.</p> <p>Children respond to diversity with respect. It displays that Ollie is able to retain what he has learnt and to then transfer it from one context to another.</p> <p>Outcome 4: LEARNING</p> <p>Children are confident and involved learners.</p> <p>Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another.</p>	<p>Continue to provide opportunity for art-related activities pertaining to Koori culture, both traditional and urban, as part of the everyday program.</p>

Documenting evidence to support ongoing planning for children's learning

Birth-to-three group

Several insights about the content and appropriate use of the Learning Outcomes in the VEYLDF came out of the Project.

Some participants found it challenging throughout the Project to 'see' babies and toddlers in the VEYLDF, especially in the Outcomes. One participant, who had responsibility for helping colleagues in her service use the VEYLDF, made a very helpful comment. When colleagues say that something in the Outcomes does not apply to babies or toddlers, she asks them to think about what behaviour precedes it and then work back until they see the relevance of the Outcome for very young children.

Some participants had limited pre-service education about children under three and this interfered substantially with their being able to see learning and use the draft tool effectively.

The duplication of the examples of evidence of learning in the five Outcomes is both a strength and a challenge, in that it encourages professionals to link any learning experience to most of the Outcomes. However, at times it means that learning is seen in a diffuse and generic way that is not helpful.

Evidence of learning in some Outcome areas was easier to see than in others – for example Outcomes 4 (confident and involved learner) and 5 (communication) seemed to be more visible than the others.

Some professionals have to be encouraged to look beyond the headings of the Outcomes to the key elements and the text under the headings.

Birth-to-eight group

All of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in documenting evidence to support ongoing learning. Participants stated that they reflected more on the process of children's learning and why it might have been successful as well as the strategies they used to promote children's learning. They also stated that they included more information about the context and background to children's learning.

Leadership group

Eighty-five per cent of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in documenting evidence to support ongoing learning. Participants who found the draft tool useful in this regard noted that it provided a quick and reliable way of summarising children's learning and planning processes, created an important step-based approach to planning, made the planning process more visible to others, was valuable for collecting evidence of children's learning, assisted in planning for children's transitions to school and encouraged the inclusion of children in discussions about their learning.

Ten per cent of participants who completed the survey either did not answer the question or did not include the draft tool as useful in supporting documentation.

Analysing evidence of children's learning

Birth-to-three group

Focus on learning as well as practice

It appears to be easier to focus on professionals' practice than on children's learning. It was a challenge and became a major aim to shift participants to focus on what children were showing evidence of learning or having learned. The Project has highlighted the value of coming up with ways (the draft tool is an example) of helping professionals to think about both children's learning and their professional practice.

Focus on learning, not doing

The distinction between what children are doing and what they are indicating that they are learning or have learned is not an obvious one. Perhaps it is the case that traditionally the focus in observations has been on actions – what children are *doing* – rather than what they are *learning*.

The subtlety of evidence of babies' and toddlers' learning

Unless professionals have deep and broad knowledge of specific evidence of learning in the first three years, their observations of very young children's learning may be limited to major obvious milestones and evidence of attachment – commonly acknowledged important developmental achievements. There is a great need for many professionals to have more knowledge about under-three-year-olds' learning and associated practices.

Example of evidence 3

Introduction

In the following example provided by a Maternal and Child Health nurse, the observation was recorded during a scheduled visit when Eva, the baby, is 4 weeks old. It's the first time the nurse has met the family, but her close and insightful observations of Eva indicate interest in the experience from the perspective of Eva and what she is learning and communicating in this experience. Eva is seen as an interested learner, secure in her relationship with her parents, and intensely observing her surroundings while striving to make sense of new experiences.

The final points noted by the nurse in her 'analysis' are particularly revealing. These are comments and questions about her own role and reflect upon the rewards of this privileged role.

As she notes:

- This was certainly a powerful experience for myself and from my observation also for the parents and not to mention the baby.
- How many other health professionals get the opportunity to share in such an experience?

'I wish I had a video'

4 weeks old

Context

4 week key age and stage visit, second appointment at the Maternal and Child Health centre. Both parents and the baby attended the appointment, and myself of course. I had not met this family before this date.

Observation

I wish I'd had a video! A beautiful 4 week visit I'd just have to share.

Last week I met a young couple for the first time at their 4 week appointment. They had been seen by another MCH nurse at the home visit and the 2 week visit.

Baby Eva was asleep when her parents entered the room. I took the opportunity to discuss material for this age visit with the parents and they shared their experiences of little sleep as the tiredness was obviously setting in. Not much about the baby but more about how they were faring at this point.

I managed to measure the baby's head circumference, length and listen to the heart beat while the baby was still asleep. The baby started to stir and looked up at her parents with a puzzled expression on her face. As I spoke the sound of my obviously different voice alerted the baby to my presence. The baby then turned and located where the sound was coming from before glancing upward at me, again puzzled at just who I was. I moved in to the main focus of Eva and started to talk to her quietly while she counted every wrinkle of my face (or so it seemed!). As Eva appeared to become more comfortable with the situation I asked the parents to watch their baby reacting to me. As the baby became excited about this new face and voice in her personal space she began to move her arms at first, and then her legs before her whole body stiffened with what appeared to be sheer delight. 'Someone is interested in me!' Not that the parents weren't of course but there was a difference with this experience that the parents had not witnessed before.

'Look, she likes you' said the mother, standing behind me. Each parent commented on what a wonderful experience this was. For me this was a valuable learning moment for all of us. Sadly I had to complete the physical examination and as dad started to remove the baby's clothing she started to cry in distress.

Analysis and interpretation

- The baby knew who her parents were and detected that my voice was different.
- Evidence that the baby was relaxed and comfortable with the interaction was her relaxed posture, facial expression and sustained eye contact.

- Excitement in Eva was evident by the uncoordinated movement of her arms and legs typical for her age and her emerging non-specific sounds.
- During this experience clear connections were being made between the neurons in the baby's brain as if the Christmas lights had been switched on for the first time. If you were doing an MRI and observing brain activity you could see concrete evidence of such.
- Each parent commented on what a wonderful experience this was and it appeared that they had not been witness to such an interaction outside that of themselves and their baby. It was just as exciting for me to see such pleasure in their experience of what was happening with their baby.
- Getting undressed and dressed at this age is a stressful experience for the baby, made evident by the baby starting to cry with a distressed tone and by the uncoordinated movements of her arms and legs.
- Baby's puzzled facial expression (frowning, squinting of eyes and sideward head movements) indicated to her parents that she had been comfortable sleeping and was perplexed at the need for her sleep to be disturbed.
- The baby was clearly hearing well and turned her head to locate the source of the sound.

Action

- Discuss that the baby is a social being and using all her senses to communicate with her parents/caregivers.
- Even though she is not capable of much physically she is able to communicate through her senses. Already at 4 weeks of age she is able to understand the interchange of conversation and knows how to respond when you talk to her.
- Suggest to the parents to watch, wait and wonder when their baby leads the conversation and what happens when you follow her lead.
- Look for how long your baby can sustain this interaction before becoming tired and showing signs of such. This may provide valuable cues to help read and interpret what it is that their baby needs.
- How the changes in behaviour and what the baby is doing indicates to you as parents that she may be tired, hungry or uncomfortable.
- Communicate with the parents that just as she is sending cues to her parents, their baby is also capable of 'reading' and responding to her parents' behaviour.
- The experience prompts discussion around how babies use their gestures, sounds and facial expressions to communicate their feelings and needs from birth. Different cries let you know they are tired, hungry or bored. Babies communicate some of their needs by looking away, arching their backs, frowning or crying. When they are ready to socialise they are interested in watching your face, smiling and vocalising.
- Share that just as baby Eva is sending cues to her parents, Eva is also capable of 'reading' and responding to her parents' behaviour.
- Explore what the parent is observing, has observed or if they have considered caring for their baby with this approach.
- Discussion about what else the parents are doing or can do to help develop their relationship with their baby. Touching their baby, caressing her or massaging her hands while you are feeding. Her hands will remain closed for some weeks yet but a gentle massage of her curled up hands will provide her with a tactile sensation that helps to let her know that she has hands.
- This was certainly a powerful experience for myself and from my observation also for the parents and not to mention the baby.
- How many other health professionals get the opportunity to share in such an experience?

All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of any children, families or staff featured.

Holistic view of curriculum – looking at learning and supporting learning broadly

Birth-to-three group

There was a tendency for participants to focus on and/or emphasise learning in identified, often adult-initiated, learning activities rather than the Frameworks' (EYLF and VEYLDF) assertion that important learning happens across the whole of the child's experience.

Encouraging professionals to focus on learning possibilities and evidence in everyday experiences or routines such as eating, dressing and undressing, sleeping and resting, arriving and leaving, toileting and nappy changing is a challenge.

The large amount of time spent in routine activities with babies and toddlers means that in order to support children's learning, early childhood professionals have to be aware of learning opportunities and evidence of learning within these everyday experiences.

Birth-to-eight group

As discussed earlier in this report, many participants struggled with analysis. An important finding is that 100 per cent of the participants who completed the

VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in supporting their analysis of children's learning. They stated that it had assisted them to focus more on the VEYLDF, to apply different theoretical lenses in the analysis of children's learning, focus more on what children had learned, write down professional knowledge of children's learning and ensure that planning is linked to the analysis.

A participant from a kindergarten service noted, 'It helps me to think about linking what has been observed ... to what specific learning took place and how that learning can be linked to the framework.'

Leadership group


As with the birth-to-eight group, the leadership group participants discussed in the workshops how the draft tool supported them to reflect on what they were documenting to highlight the lack of analysis. This provided a catalyst for people to focus their attention more effectively on reporting on what children had demonstrated that they had learnt.

The following example, Artefact 1, illustrates how one participant went back to her documentation and was able to recognise that what she had written was a narrative describing what the child was doing rather than what they had learnt.

Artefact 1

VCAA Early Years Outcomes Group: A draft tool for capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of the child/ren recorded by: Robyn

Child/Children's Name: [redacted] / [redacted] / [redacted] Date: 27th October 2010 Time: 10:30am

Document and Record	Analyse and Interpret	Act
 <p><i>Julia had asked to use the trampoline as soon as she arrived. [redacted] was on the verandah looking for something. Soon they were both building a car. Julia was very animated when she spoke to Robyn. Robyn asked if she had time to do 'a special job'. Just a minute, I'm busy" she explained as she rushed to rejoin [redacted] ... "I'm home. What you want me to do?" [redacted] replied "Cook the tea". "I have to get the baby first" continued Julia as she rushed back out of the house towards the car.</i></p> <p><i>..... much later in the session Julia approached the table and asked "Can I do this now?"</i></p> <p>Context: Julia usually arrives at kinder about 30 minutes into the session after taking her siblings to school. Staff have previously observed that Julia likes to use the trampoline when it is out and she has recently requested to use the small trampoline as soon as she arrives. Today was the first time she has asked to use the larger outdoor trampoline on arrival. Julia is reserved with her emotions, communicates very quietly and makes very few requests in the kindergarten setting. Julia's mother is anxious about Julia's behaviour around those outside the family. She is often involved in play with Amy, a long-time family friend.</p>	<p><i>It was fantastic to see Julia so animated and involved as an equal participant in play with some different peers. I felt elated when Julia was passing the Father's day card area and I asked her to participate and she replied "Just a minute, I'm busy". I realized [redacted] appreciated our relationship and understood her 'busy-ness' would be respected. (sense of identity)</i></p> <p><i>Julia's voice was clear and of confident volume and her animation indicated she was engaged in an enjoyable and reciprocal interaction with [redacted]. (effective communicator)</i></p> <p><i>Julia is often observed in pretend and role play with Amy. Staff have not been able to identify if this is Julia's interest or whether she shares this interest through Amy's lead. Her family have shared that she enjoys playing with her 'babies' at home. Today it was apparent that Julia enjoys home-life based pretend play and is able to engage in this play with a wider group. (connected and contribute to their world)</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i>Julia was a confident communicator with both [redacted] and her peers as she took part in the home play. Julia engaged in enjoyable and reciprocal interaction with her peers and demonstrated a range of uses for communication, including making requests.</i></p> </div>	<p><i>This is an important scenario to share with Julia's mother as it highlights Julia as a successful communicator and play partner.... I'm sure she will be when the scenario is recounted. I wonder if it's wise to share this story in [redacted]'s presence.</i></p> <p><i>Staff will provide the trampoline daily as this seems to be an integral part of Julia's routine.</i></p> <p><i>Attempts will be made to draw Julia into small group play/ actively games / board games / art activities that also involve [redacted]. We hope this will support Julia forming connections with an increasing group as well as extending on her emerging relationship with [redacted].</i></p>

This draft tool has been collaboratively designed for trial use by participants in the Outcomes Project data collection VCAA Early Years Unit October 2010

It is important to note that participants in the birth-to-three group, the leadership and the birth-to-eight groups adapted the format and/or language of the draft tool to reflect their learning and writing style as well as their interests.

The following example, Artefact 2, was used by a participant in the leadership group who adjusted the tool to consider dispositions for learning within a Prep classroom.

Supporting interactions with children

Birth-to-three group

All participants in the birth-to-three group who completed the VCAA evaluation survey reported that the draft tool had been useful in supporting their interactions with children.

Participants described changes in awareness of their own actions and impact on children's learning. They described asking more questions and listening more closely to what children were saying or demonstrating through actions or facial expressions; paying attention to cues within that linked to the Communication Outcome. The context for children was foregrounded much more and participants described looking further at what children's behaviours might be indicating. Participants described being more observant of and more curious about what children were doing and the meaning of this for children's learning. This led to more open-ended interactions with children, asking more questions in the play and being more aware of the impact of their own actions.

Artefact 2

Dispositions for learning

Social (Blue box): Co operation, Helpful, takes turns, listens, shares her work, helps others.

Creative (Red box): Imagination, Individuality, unique, reflects particular child.

Attitude (Green box): Curiosity, Confidence, Enthusiasm, inquisitive questions + thinking, positive body language, loud, animated talking.

On Task (Yellow box): Persistence, Precision, Concentration, attention to detail, improving child's satisfaction, minimal distractions.

Questions to monitor + assess:

- Social:** Which parts did you work on? How did other kid's ideas make this happen? Did everyone work well together? Can you tell me what your partner did?
- Creative:** Where did you get your ideas from? Is it ok that your work is different from everyone else's? Did anyone else do the same?
- Attitude:** Did you like this activity? Why is it here? (rating scale)
- On Task:** What was hard? and how did you make it work? Did it take a long time?

Questions to scaffold thinking for further work:

- Social:** How could you organize jobs for each kid in the group? What could you do if someone wasn't working well?
- Creative:** How could you think of new ideas?
- Attitude:** What new things did you learn? What worked well? What didn't? How do I know you are enjoying this activity?
- On Task:** How did you make it work? Was it noisy? Could you concentrate? What could you do next time to make this better?

Legend:

- 0 Not evident
- 1 Sometimes
- 2 Frequently
- 3 Consistently

Birth-to-eight group

Seventy-seven per cent of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in supporting their interactions with children. Twenty-three per cent did not believe that the draft tool had been useful in this regard. Participants defined usefulness in terms of being more aware of children's different learning styles, listening to children's perspectives of what is happening, reflecting on interactions with children and focusing more on extending children's interests. One participant who did not believe the draft tool supported her interactions with children qualified that it had influenced what she saw as important in her documentation.

Leadership group

Sixty-five per cent of the participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had been useful in supporting their interactions with children. Five per cent did not believe that it had been useful in this regard. Ten per cent did not comment and 10 per cent commented without circling yes or no. Participants defined usefulness in terms of listening to children, supporting children's learning through analysis, integrating children's perspectives into their curriculum, becoming more attuned to children's learning pathways and viewing children from a holistic-strengths-based perspective.

Example of evidence 4

Introduction

Family day care home

Children's ages: David, 2.9 years, Connor, 3.5 years

Project participant: Sarah

Record	What learning was noticed?	Future planning
<p>Connor was walking around with a phone to his ear, chatting: 'Oh, its okay mate. I had no service. Don't worry; it's my work phone...' He was pacing up and down the room. Following two steps behind was David, who had a phone to his ear as well. He was mimicking all the moves and conversations that Connor was having. Each time Connor swapped ears with his phone, David did the same. This continued on for approximately 8 minutes. Connor went off to use the computer but David continued to pace backwards and forwards chatting on the phone to his mum.</p> <p>He then followed Connor into the playroom, where he initiated conversation with Connor and asked him to answer his phone.</p>	<p>David does not usually join in with other children when they are playing, so it was great to see him actively involve himself with the game that other children were participating in. Identity (Outcome 1) - show interest in other children and being part of a group, engage in and contribute to shared play experiences. Community (Outcome 2) – demonstrates a sense of belonging and comfort in their environment. Learners (Outcome 4) – develop an ability to mirror, repeat and practise the actions of others. Although he talks at home, David rarely makes conversation in the care environment, although his speech when at home is very good.</p> <p>This observation showed me that he is beginning to feel a part of our group and can be relaxed and confident in his environment (communication, learner, identity and wellbeing).</p>	<p>Connor was aware that David was mimicking him so he actually put more emphasis on his verbal language and body language. I will talk to Connor about how he was helping David become more relaxed and comfortable in his environment (respectful relationships and responsive engagement).</p> <p>I will talk to David's parents about how great it was to see him brimming with confidence and feeling like he was a member of our group (family-centred practice).</p> <p>I will support David to learn the skills to participate and contribute to group play and projects.</p> <p>I will provide time and space for David to engage in both individual and collaborative pursuits.</p>

Planning learning opportunities for specific services

Birth-to-three group

All participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey described the draft tool as assisting them in planning learning opportunities for specific services. Participants defined their own awareness of learning opportunities as having expanded as a result of the Project, e.g. expanding the experiences offered to children and providing experiences that may not have been considered without deeper consideration. It was noted that more focused documentation expands the variety of experiences provided and the connection to a number of outcomes to support learning. Participants described an increased awareness of the opportunities for shared decision making with children. Noticing, recognising and responding to the learning opportunities within everyday routines was described by participants as a new focus within their work with young children.

Birth-to-eight group

Seventy-seven per cent of participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had assisted them in planning learning opportunities in the specific service. Fifteen per cent stated it had not assisted them in this way and 8 per cent were unsure. Participants defined planning opportunities more broadly as future planning to capture children's learning; they shared this learning with colleagues and families and included any actions in their ongoing planning and reflection. A participant from a kindergarten program noted that it gave her a new impetus in her work with children.

My focus was revived and it allowed me to revisit experiences with children and to extend them further...

Leadership group

Forty-two percent of participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had helped them plan learning opportunities in the specific service. The remaining 58 per cent did not comment. Participants discussed creating links with other services – particularly when working in isolated services – working with teams of colleagues to build evidence of children's learning, exploring how to convey evidence of children's learning to families, planning transition programs for children and showcasing evidence of learning to the centre community.

Participant 17 stated that the draft tool assisted her to reconsider the planning cycle.

The tool reminds me that ongoing planning through an observation is vital for the next step in children's learning and it reminds me to write it down as part of the plan for the child and not to see it as a side product.

Partnerships with families about their children's learning

Birth-to-three group

All participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey described a change in their relationships with families and an increased awareness of the possibilities within partnerships. Examples included connecting more with parents to describe interactions and thinking together about the meaning for the child. Participants described supporting families to think together about the meaning behind children's behaviours. The use of the draft tool in documentation resulted in a clearer picture of children's learning to share with families. One participant described being less judgmental of families.

Birth-to-eight group

Seventy seven per cent of participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had assisted them to have conversations with families about their child's learning. They stated that it helped them to share specific examples of learning with parents and was easy for parents to follow. One participant believed that it created opportunities for them to have conversations with parents, based on evidence. Another believed that the draft tool gave parents a more complete picture of the curriculum planning process. Thirty-three per cent believed that the draft tool didn't assist them in having conversations with parents about their child's learning, citing in this regard practices established prior to starting the Project. One participant noted how the draft tool had developed staff's confidence in discussing children's learning with parents – *It has given staff more confidence in explaining the learning outcomes in a professional manner instead of saying 'He has had a good day'*.

Leadership group

Forty-seven per cent of participants who completed the VCAA evaluation survey believed that the draft tool had helped them have conversations with families about their child's learning. Twenty-one per cent did not believe that it had helped them in this way. Five per cent could not answer this question, 10 per cent did not circle yes or no and 17 per cent didn't circle but commented. Participants who found it helpful in this way stated that the draft tool will be useful for parent-teacher interviews, collaborative planning with families and talking to parents more about children's strengths.

A participant from a primary school noted a variety of strategies to use to engage with families.

Information nights – start of year on expectations/housekeeping information for the year. Parent-teacher interviews, reports, informal meetings if parents wish to catch up. Each child has a portfolio with documented learning activities. There are opportunities for parents to comment in these on future goals for their child. Also a holiday page for parents and children to contribute to, linking home and school.

Valuing developmental pathways

When asked to provide any other ways in which the draft tool had assisted them, one participant in the birth-to-eight group noted that it had helped to value each child's developmental pathways and helped make children's learning visible. Another participant noted that it had been used in an early intervention setting to discuss a child's progress and learning with parents. Another linked the how-to section with strategies in the home with parents. A participant in the leadership group noted that it was a useful tool for colleagues especially the 'Why do you think this is important?' section. Participants found it had helped them to analyse more effectively. One participant specifically mentioned that she found it very useful for collecting evidence of a child with learning difficulties and found it helpful to document this child's progression more clearly.

Example of evidence 5

Introduction

The following example took place in a Special Developmental School setting with three- to four-year-old children. The teacher, Marice, had used this as an example in a workshop to highlight the value of drawing on a strengths-based framework to communicate children's learning with parents. In this observation Marice notes the first time Amelia, who is diagnosed with autism, establishes eye contact with a staff member during lunchtime. This observation was significant to Marice as it highlighted an important moment in Amelia's learning pathway; from not being able to eat a meal with children, to being able to sit with children at mealtimes, to being able to actively initiate a humorous interaction with the staff member at the mealtime. It enabled Marice to show parents evidence of how Amelia had become a more confident learner in a group situation and was able to communicate her sense of humour with teachers. This also provided Marice with an opportunity to highlight to the parents how the key strategies that they had developed to positively support Amelia to feel comfortable sitting with her peers at lunchtime had evolved over time.

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VCAA Early Years Outcomes Group

A draft tool for capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of the child/ren recorded by:

Child/Children's Name/s: _____

Date _____ Time _____

Document and record	Analyse and interpret	Act
<p>Amelia was sitting at the table during mealtime. She left the spoon in her mouth and made cheeky eye contact with a staff member. The staff member laughed. Later Amelia repeated the activity, made a vocalisation to get attention, and then laughed.</p> <p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amelia is a child diagnosed with autism • In the presence of staff or other children she would often become a passive observer • Setting – sitting at the table at mealtime with six other children and two staff • At the beginning of the year she would not eat in the presence of the other children • As time passed she would sit with the group for meals but passively resisted feeding herself although she had the physical skills to do so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amelia has learnt to function independently in a group situation, i.e. eating a meal with others • She has also shown she can initiate an interaction with staff using humour • She was confident and having fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a child finds social interaction overwhelming to the point of passivity it is valuable to break down interactions into smaller achievable stages. For example, on this occasion Amelia has responded well when a confronting task was broken down into socially manageable situations. She was sensitively challenged with a new expectation until she could confidently engage in the social event of sharing a meal with others. <p>The break down was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We discovered Amelia would eat after all the children left the table, so we sat her at a separate table away from the group • Over a period of time we moved her table closer to the group • Then Amelia sat with the group but would not feed herself • Staff coactively fed her and gradually faded the assistance to the point where she automatically sat with the group and ate at mealtimes • Discreetly included humour in situations with Amelia to lead her beyond a passive response

All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of any children, families or staff featured.

Birth-to-three group

Comments and responses to the draft tool were collected throughout the workshops and the evaluation survey distributed to participants after the final workshop.

Workshop 5 provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on and provide feedback about their use of the draft tool.

Comments from that workshop included:

- *It will inform our practice. We want to be more intentional in what we do in our work with families and children and to see the power of what we're doing.*

- *We don't always get much acknowledgment from supervisors about the importance of what we're doing, so doing the reflection is powerful because it lets us see more clearly what we're actually doing. Using the draft tool demonstrates to us the importance of our work and makes this more visible to others.*
- *The framework and documentation shows that I'm doing intentional teaching. I'm more aware of this now and able to share this with other educators, more so than previously.*
- *I know what I'm doing [now] and I know why I'm doing it.*

Example of evidence 6

Background commentary from the Maternal and Child Health nurse

The following observation, recorded by a Maternal and Child Health nurse, developed from her growing interest in incorporating the Learning Outcomes into her daily practice. The use of the MCH Framework with the VEYLDF expands her professional role to focus on what young children, and in this case babies, are learning. The nurse was well aware that the high rate of use of the Maternal and Child Health service, especially for early visits, provided an opportunity for engaging with parents and providing meaningful learning experiences for the babies.

In the example below, a narrative style is used to document the observations and to convey the nurse's sense of wonder and delight in the babies' responses to being read to. This second experience with the librarian builds on the introductory reading session, and it's clear that the babies are actively engaged in this interaction.

The 'actions' arising from the observations and analysis are wide ranging – they consider the perspective and interest of the babies' parents, and include opportunities for the nurse to share her knowledge of the babies' health and physical development. Primarily, though, the focus is on enhancing and extending the experience for the babies.

Eyes light up

4–12 weeks of age; reading a story in first-time-parents' group.

Context

The second session of a new-parents group at the Maternal and Child Health Centre. All the parents were sitting on chairs in a circle with their babies on their laps. Also present were the children's librarian and the Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Observation (as detailed by the MCH nurse)

The children's librarian visited the new-parents group to introduce the families to the local library and the importance of reading to their children. All the mothers and their babies are sitting around on chairs in a circle. The librarian is sitting in the middle of the group, with mothers and babies each side of her. She starts to read a book to the babies. As the librarian turns the pages of the book and changes the intonation of her voice (sometimes a 3D book) the babies 'light up'.

Their eyes become bigger, their mouths open wide, and some even start to drool as if to say I can't wait to eat you, touch you, feel you and taste you. Their arms and legs move in a very uncoordinated manner, typical for their stage of development, and they lean forward – reaching, hungry for more.

Some of the babies are observed to wake from their sleep and become interested in a concentrated effort to make sense of what is happening. After the librarian has completed the story the babies relax into their mothers' arms and bodies as if they had run a marathon! 'That was exhilarating and exhausting! Thank you.'

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Analysis and interpretation

- Babies appear innately curious about their surroundings.
- Babies are responding to the different voice and fluctuations in the tone of the voice. This reinforces to parents that their infants' hearing is particularly tuned to the sort of high-pitched, sing-song tone they instinctively adopt when talking to their young babies. Parents often don't think they change their tone that much. It is an opportunity for parents to witness the reactions of babies in the group other than their own. The vocal intonation appeared to be sufficient to wake some babies from their sleep.
- The babies cannot see their mothers but this does not appear to matter to the babies at this moment. Interestingly they do not look for their mothers' reassurance during the storytelling. They are so engaged in the moment.
- They do not even appear to be aware of the babies sitting next to or opposite them.
- They become receptive to the calm tone and display enjoyment of the experience by smiling, vocalising and becoming more uncoordinated in their body movements.
- This is a positive experience that excites them to crave more.

Action

- This visit gives me the opportunity to show parents what this experience means to their children.
- Pointing out how each child is responding and what their child is doing to indicate their interest in the activity and then what is happening in their babies' brains as they are busily connecting up neurons. I will draw a picture of what the brain looks like and indicate how with each stimulus the baby receives a new connection is made. The parents are fascinated.
- This allows the opportunity for an intentional teaching moment.

Further conversation often centres around questions

- Did you think that would happen?
- I wonder what that felt like for the baby?
- What was that like for you?
- Does it inspire you to read to your baby?
- Do you like to read?
- What do you experience or feel when you become engrossed in a book?
- Perhaps you could share the experience with your partner, try it again and again, create a moment to share with your baby in a wakeful period.
- It is interesting to observe the parents whose babies may be in the pram pick them up and hastily invite them to join the experience – 'Quick, don't miss out on this.'
- Babies can be helped to enjoy reading even more when their head is well supported. Some babies find it more difficult than others to hold their head up, particularly if they were born prematurely.
- Being aware of the baby's state is also important: if the baby is sleepy, hungry, or in pain, the last thing she will feel like is being sociable. If, however, the baby is contented and alert and in a comfortable position, she is likely to be keen to interact.

Participants' recommendations – improvements to the draft tool

In the evaluation at the end of the Project, participants recommended that a fourth section be added to the tool to include critical reflection and review.

Participants also highlighted ways in which the tool could be improved. Recommendations included linking evidence clearly to children's learning, focusing on children's prior learning in the context section, integrating the VEYLDF and describing analysis of learning more clearly, providing space to add children's reflections, reviewing the physical layout of headings and focusing more clearly on next steps in planning.

Adaptation to service settings

Participants also suggested ways in which further information could be recorded and stressed the importance of the draft tool being adapted for different children's settings and contexts. The following sections outline specific feedback at the end of the Project about the usefulness of the draft tool. The majority of participants found it to be a valuable tool that they adapted and used to document and analyse evidence of children's learning and to plan effective interventions to support children's ongoing learning.

The detail that follows was developed by the VCAA in consultation with the Project leaders in response to evaluation feedback from participants.

The practice of critical reflection and review

Reflective practice helps early childhood professionals to become increasingly thoughtful about their work and to have the courage to explore new ideas and approaches. This reflective process supports examination of all aspects of an experience or event.

Reflection occurs at child level and at a service level. When undertaken collectively, reflective practice is more powerful and more likely to lead to change.

A **reflective journal** supports professionals to think critically, flexibly and creatively about both children's learning and their practices. A reflective journal:

- is an essential step in deliberation
- supports intentional analysis of both professional practice and children's learning
- supports thoughtful and purposeful written review and discussion that leads to actions, next steps and improvements.

This builds on the idea that early childhood professionals:

- see children as capable and resourceful learners
- recognise that responsive relationships between children and adults support shared control of the learning environment and experiences
- create environments that are rich in materials and in interactions
- use discussions and activities that encourage analysis and reasoning

- support children to think, negotiate, problem solve, make decisions, challenge existing ideas and take risks
- embed concepts and experiences
- place themselves in the play and in the learning
- provide time and space for children.

To support deeper thinking, early childhood professionals:

- look for patterns in children learning
- share different viewpoints
- think about what other approaches could be used
- place themselves in the play and learning
- provide time and space for children.

Review questions

Based on discussions with families, children and professional colleagues, what do reflective practice and intentional analysis mean for future planning – for children's learning, program planning and professional practice?

- How does this observation relate to the VEYLDF?
- What changes will I make to my practice?
- How does this observation and reflection assist me to think differently about this child / group of children?

Use the key ideas of specific, tight, focused observations to shape your thinking:

- build up the evidence
- reflect and note what is shifting over time.

Section 8: Challenges and opportunities

The Project highlighted the power of having a VEYLDF about children's learning that applies to a range of professionals whose work focuses on young children and their families. Common concepts and language create greater possibilities for sharing and collaborating. The Project highlighted the power of the language and concepts in the VEYLDF to be used by professionals in their communication and collaboration with families. With babies and toddlers particularly, there is increased importance in ongoing sharing of information and boosting parents' confidence in their child rearing. This occurs while supporting families to appreciate their child as an amazing learner and to see their critical role in that learning.

The challenges for the early childhood professionals in all groups included:

- using a strengths-based approach to make early learning and development more visible
- helping other professionals and families to make meaning of that learning and development
- using their interpretations of the evidence to inform their interactions with children
- supporting the provision of learning experiences to optimise children's learning and development

What follows is a summary of challenges and opportunities that are particular to the birth-to-three group.

This is then followed by challenges and opportunities arising from both the leadership and birth-to-eight groups.

Challenges and opportunities identified in the birth-to-three group

There are a number of challenges associated with the Project, most notably addressing the diversity within the group (including different levels of education and confidence as well as work settings, professional backgrounds and perspectives). In addition, the challenges of time constraints for participants and the impact on completion of Project tasks and collection of evidence of children's learning.

The major challenges:

1. Many participants reported having limited or inadequate time for reflection and careful recording of children's learning and for conversations with colleagues. They cited increasing pressures and demands on their time. These are issues especially for MCH nurses and educators in child care centres and family day care.
2. Some participants viewed using the draft tool as additional to what they were already doing rather than regarding its use as an alternative means of documentation. That is not to say that the concerns about lack of time were baseless, but it did indicate that some professionals were required to or believed they should continue to use more traditional, established ways of documenting even while they were attempting to trial the use of the draft tool.
3. Linking practice closely to documentation and thinking beyond learning activities to a broad notion that includes the child's total experience are also challenges.

Some participants found it difficult to:

- move beyond the practice of simply recording observations to focusing on interpreting and analysing them
 - attend to the Practice Principles as well as the Learning and Development Outcomes
 - conceptualise the Outcomes in the VEYLDF broadly and inclusively.
4. Much of the evidence of important learning in children under three is subtle and easily missed. This requires a foundation of both child development and the Learning Outcomes to know what to look for, to interpret evidence of learning and to identify and carry out good practice. There is still to some degree a prevailing attitude in early learning settings that working with babies and toddlers is less complex than working with older children. This relates to the point above, as it means that sometimes less highly qualified, knowledgeable and skilled educators are assigned to work with the youngest children.

Collaboration between early childhood professionals

The challenges provide a number of opportunities, and considerable progress has been made in conceptualising ways to meet those challenges. The diversity within the group is also one of the Project's great strengths, giving participants opportunities to learn more about others' roles, see links and commonalities and share ideas about new ways of working with the VEYLDF.

For the facilitators/mentors, working with the participants was an active and rewarding learning experience. The challenges experienced by this group remind us that the Outcomes from this Project must be relevant and meaningful to varied early childhood settings, so addressing the challenges presented by the diversity of this group of participants is particularly exciting.

Critical reflection

The mentors/leaders, along with the VCAA staff assigned to the Project have learned a lot about working with the VEYLDF in ways that will improve professionals' practice. In addition to the learning mentioned above, the value of opportunities to reflect critically on practice has become very evident.

Discussion of examples of children's learning has revealed to the facilitators/mentors, as well as the participants, significant commonalities and possibilities that exist among different service types and professional backgrounds.

The capacity of the group, as individuals and collectively, to document and discuss evidence of learning and attach meaning to that learning, presents a unique opportunity.

Making learning and development more visible and meaningful in this earliest period of life is simultaneously a challenge and an opportunity.

Commitment of participants within the Project

Enthusiastic and eager participants, keen to learn and supported by their workplace to participate in the Project, were an essential enabler. In the birth-to-three group, participants differed in their levels of understanding of babies' and toddlers' learning from the beginning and throughout the Project. This presented challenges at times but the openness and respect for each other compensated for differences.

The ease with which participants established **open relationships with each other** and their interest in

sharing ideas and learning about each other's work gave momentum to discussion in all groups.

The duration of the Project was a contributor to its success. This gave time for relationships of trust to develop, for everyone to learn from each other and to work out appropriate uses of the draft tool. It seems unlikely that the Project would have been as successful without this extended timeframe.

The availability of both the EYLF and the VEYLDF, and most importantly the fact that they are completely complementary and compatible, was a clear positive. The main focus in the Project was the Learning and Development Outcomes from the VEYLDF, which are the same as the EYLF Outcomes. However, the concepts of belonging, being and becoming within the EYLF further informed the discussions and the work of the groups. The use of both framework documents as a reference and a guide strengthened the Project.

Participants embraced the value of partnerships with families readily, along with the idea that a focus on evidence of children's learning is something that can be shared with families. However, a barrier for some participants was an inability to move from seeing their role as educating parents to seeing parents as partners who have many insights and a lot of information to share.

Focus on Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

The participation of MCH nurses within the Project was invaluable. In part this is because they are the most highly qualified professionals in the group. Their work is so crucial to 'capturing' parents early in their child-rearing experience. The VEYLDF and the five Outcomes and principles provide strong evidence for collaborative connections with other services to support children and families. The development of stronger links with MCH and other services would better support assessment for learning and early identification of need. The early contact that MCH nurses in Victoria have with all families provides specific opportunities to reorient the focus on both learning and development, with the VEYLDF linked to the Key Ages and Stages Framework.

The experience in this Project indicates that there may need to be targeted initiatives to support the MCH sector to engage with the VEYLDF. Experience also indicates that this would be very worthwhile, and would not only benefit that sector but more impor-

tantly the other professionals and services for which the VEYLDF was written. Most importantly, children and families would benefit from this.

Supported playgroups – and a focus on learning

The enthusiasm of the supported playgroup facilitators in the birth-to-three group suggests that further work to help them focus on children's learning and to share that focus with families would be very worthwhile and welcomed.

Challenges and opportunities identified across birth-to-eight and leadership groups

The learning identified as useful by participants in this section also addressed the challenges they identified in **the pre-program questionnaire**. These challenges were around the implementation of the VEYLDF. Over one-third of respondents (36.7 per cent) stated that becoming familiar with the VEYLDF was challenging, especially using the language and adapting current practices.

Participants described the challenges as 'getting my head around' the VEYLDF, wanting it to become second nature or part of their thinking. Some respondents felt challenged by the need to modify current formats and practices, and were unsure of how to achieve the Outcomes for children. Six participants (20 per cent) also spoke about the challenge in supporting colleagues and others outside of the immediate setting to implement the frameworks in meaningful ways.

This was a particular issue for the participants from the school sector, where the VEYLDF has limited recognition within their broader school community as it is not mandated as part of the reporting process.

Out of school hours and family day care participants commented on the challenges of documenting children's learning when you may see children for ten minutes each morning or for one hour once a week. The industrial issues for early childhood professionals working in these services were described as a key factor, as the staff do not have paid time away from children to record children's learning.

Family day care coordinators discussed the challenges of supporting a diverse range of staff in collecting evidence of children's achievement of the Learning Outcomes.

Primary school teachers discussed the challenges of integrating the VEYLDF into the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Participants working in schools identified the benefits of using the draft tool. They reported that the detail within the Outcomes had influenced their planning and practice in early years classrooms while reporting to the VELS.

Kindergarten teachers spoke of the challenges in engaging staff in collecting evidence of children's learning.

While these issues can be service-specific they also highlighted common workplace challenges across services and included:

- limited planning time
- juggling a range of responsibilities during their time with children
- supporting colleagues to document children's achievement of the Learning Outcomes in the VEYLDF
- developing smooth transitions for children's learning across sectors.

These commonalities created a sense of connection between participants around their work in this Project and resulted in staff developing close links across service types. Several staff in both groups developed links outside their workshop sessions to support each other in their work.

Section 9: Implications for further work

Introduction

In this section the opportunities and strengths of the Project from the perspectives of both participants and Project leaders is described.

Qualifications and children's development

Some professionals will need assistance to appreciate the place of developmental perspectives in interpreting the Outcomes. Some believe that embracing the VEYLDF Outcomes means disregarding what they know about developmental perspectives. Efforts need to be made to see that developmental areas or domains are embedded in the Learning Outcomes and that they are still important. The challenge is to support professionals to move away from a solely developmental focus and to incorporate this focus into the perspectives on learning afforded by the Outcomes. What this highlights is that the quality and level of qualifications, especially for people working in early learning settings with babies and toddlers, is a barrier. This results in educators knowing little about learning and development in children under three years, not seeing evidence or missing out on appreciating its importance.

Qualifications and the limits that this can place on participants' experience and expertise are noted as a key national reform issue within early childhood. There is an identified need for particular attention to children under three years: what they are learning, the evidence of that learning and practice change to support the learning.

Partnership with families

The potential of using evidence of children's learning as a vehicle for partnerships with parents is obvious from this Project and is worth more detailed exploration – that is, working in collaboration with parents to build a rich and detailed picture of each child.

Participants noted that discussions in the Project assisted them to move away from an 'expert model' to a way of working that involves collaboration with families. Discussions centred around the notion that professionals have as much to learn from families as

families have to learn from professionals. Each has unique expertise and knowledge to be shared openly and respectfully.

The critical importance of ongoing professional learning

The Project, particularly the conversations in the workshops, reinforced and highlighted for participants the complexity of their work and a sense of themselves as professionals. For some, participation strengthened and supported an image of themselves as leaders, as they shared their learning with colleagues. Several of the participants shared stories of how they had been able to use the insights they gained through the Project to influence the work of the whole service in which they work.

Holistic view of children's learning

Focusing on the Learning Outcomes in the VEYLDF has also encouraged professionals to move beyond a pure developmental focus, at times aimed at detecting deficits, to a more holistic view of children and their learning. This view takes account of strengths, interests, personal style, temperament and family, community and cultural context. The discussions in the workshops and the development and use of the draft tool have also helped participants see the limitations of some traditional ways of documenting learning – for example, checklists – and the advantages of more narrative and qualitative assessments for learning.

Culture of learning linked to professionalism

There is a need for advocacy for workplaces to support reflective practice and a culture of learning. While it was clear that some services operate as a community of learners and have a lively culture of critical reflection, others do not. Leadership is no doubt a big factor in this, but working conditions and status and valuing of the work of educating children, contributes. The expectation of working in partnership with families and recognition of the complexity and importance of the work must be actively promoted and supported.

The power of relationships: The way the Project was conducted highlighted the critical importance of mutually respectful relationships as a basis for professional learning. Relationships strengthened as the Project progressed and increasingly participants cited opportunities to talk with each other and share ideas as the most valuable component of the Project. It did

not appear that the diversity of type and level of qualifications, or the different roles and service types, interfered with eagerness to share and learn from each other.

Interest in learning about the work of other professionals: Related to the above, participants seemed eager to learn more about the work of other participants, both those who worked in the same type of service and those who worked in service types they were not familiar with. It appeared that their knowledge of each other's work was very limited at the beginning of the Project.

Resistance to writing: Participants contributed willingly and enthusiastically to discussions and made many promises to send in records of uses of the draft tool, but there seemed to be a reluctance on the part of many participants to commit to experimentation with writing ideas down and reflections about children's learning. Even though the facilitators worked hard to establish a non-threatening collegial relationship, perhaps this reluctance had something to do with fear of 'getting it wrong' or not doing what was expected. While this resistance to providing evidence was explicitly described within the birth-to-three group, it was evident across all groups.

The VCAA and Project leaders set up active mentoring periods within workshops to discuss and progress draft evidence. Most participants produced what was expected of them, but it took a lot of encouragement for this to happen.

Structure and duration of Project: Having the Project extend over several months provided several important opportunities for participants to:

- build relationships between participants and between facilitators and participants
- clarify and revise expectations and, given the pilot nature of the Project, identify effective ways to proceed
- make the shifts required by the Project (for example, focusing on learning, going beyond the obvious, looking for learning and learning opportunities in everyday experiences, trying out the draft tool)
- develop confidence to trial approaches in services and provide advice back to Project leaders and participants.

As the Project progressed, the level of discussion and debate increased within and across the workshops. The majority of participants described an increase in confidence linked to practice, and understanding and knowledge of the Outcomes.

Strengths of the Project

A key strength of the Project has been the mix of work settings and professional backgrounds that add richness to the workshops, discussions and to the Outcomes Project as a whole. There are major differences among the work settings in the frequency of contact with children and families, ranging from daily (in long day care services and primary schools), to regular weekly timetabled sessions (kindergarten and some child care centres), to weekly (in playgroups), to less frequent contact (Maternal and Child Health services, family day care field officers, early childhood intervention professionals and out of school hours care coordinators).

Participants described a new focus and changing relationships in their work with colleagues in their workplaces. Some participants reported taking on a mentoring role with colleagues to assist in areas of pedagogy, documentation and assessment. They have assessed what being, belonging and becoming means to colleagues, have more detailed discussions about the VEYLDF and the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

Participants discussed the creation of links with other services, particularly those working in home-based services or stand-alone services.

Participants described the increased power in working with teams of colleagues to build evidence of children's learning, exploring how to convey evidence of children's learning to families, planning transition programs for children and showcasing evidence of learning to the centre community.

The value of the investment of time in this Project has had a significant impact on individual participants. It is clear also that meaningful and lasting change that is built around reflective practice and anchored in collaborative relationships takes time. It takes time to begin to feel confident in experimenting with different ideas, and it takes time to build up confidence to discuss findings with colleagues and with Project leaders. This is particularly a feature of early childhood services birth to five. It will be a feature to note within the national quality framework and the model of continuous improvement.

Communication with the early years sector

The VCAA and Project leaders have finalised evidence collection from the Project. The strategies for communication to the sector were designed in consultation with the participants directly within workshops and by drawing on data from the VCAA evaluation survey.

A key communication method will be created through the Early Years Exchange (EYE), a new online resource developed in 2010 to assist early childhood practitioners in getting started with the VEYLDF. The EYE is used by a wide range of early childhood professionals. It is intended to use the EYE to develop a series of video clips and snapshots of learning from the Project to illustrate the evidence collection in the Outcomes.

Other communication initiatives for dissemination of the evidence include:

- social media options to encourage further discussion of ideas and evidence of children's learning
- ongoing opportunities for Outcomes Project participants within regions to support each other and to provide leadership to colleagues
- joint presentations with Outcomes Project participants at network meetings and conferences from July 2011.

The Assessment for Learning and Development Project (ALD Project) in 2012

In 2012 the ALD Project will build on emerging evidence from the pilot Outcomes Project 2010–2011 to further inform implementation of the VEYLDF within early years networks and learning communities.

The ALD Project will have a central focus on assessment for learning and development in a curriculum planning cycle. Assessment for learning and development in this Project is defined as a process of observing, recording and documenting what children do, say, make, write or draw in order to plan effectively for children's current and future learning.

The focus for participants in the ALD Project is to:

- use the five outcomes as outlined in the VEYLDF as key reference points to identify children's progress
- apply a diverse range of methods and tools to document and analyse multiple and systematic examples of evidence of children's capabilities and milestones
- apply this information as part of a curriculum-planning cycle to advance children's learning
- implement collaborative approaches to assessment learning with children, with families and with other early childhood professionals.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of workshop delivery – birth-to-three group

Workshop 1: Introduction to the Project and its intended methodology

A major goal of this workshop was to lay the foundations for relationships of respect, trust and support that underpin genuine collaboration. The diversity of the group (including professional status differences) meant that getting to know participants individually and gaining trust were important goals explicitly identified for this workshop and they remained a feature of all workshops. The facilitators modelled this approach in their interactions with each other and with participants.

Participants reflected on the challenges and rewards of working with families and considered the outcomes they desired in their work with families – including outcomes specifically for young children. This emphasis on collaborating with families to support children's learning, and the potential of looking for and recording evidence of children's learning to support this collaboration was a feature of the entire Project with this group.

A brief PowerPoint presentation on practitioner-based inquiry/action research was discussed and participants workshopped possible action-research topics for individual projects.

Workshop 2

Workshop 2 stressed the importance of individual participant contributions and those of the group as a whole to the Project. The facilitators re-emphasised the centrality to this Project of collaborative partnerships with families and provided opportunities for relationship building in the group.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- present information about various ways of documenting children's learning and assessment and to canvass ways participants do this currently
- highlight the distinction between documenting and assessing and the essential nature of analysis and interpretation of documentation in order to make meaning of it
- build familiarity with the Learning and Development Outcomes and Practice Principles in the VEYLDF
- help participants focus their initial observations and reflections on their individual projects on these Outcomes.

As an initial prompt, participants were asked how they currently document children's learning and development. This discussion was used to highlight the difference between documentation and assessment and to consider the advantages and disadvantages of using highly structured assessment tools.

It was emphasised that tools developed as a result of this Project need to support not just documentation but also analysis and interpretation.

It was noted that there is no one 'best' or 'right' way to document children's learning and development. Most experienced professionals use a variety of methods/tools of documentation. Some of these need more interpretation than others.

The responses to these points were used to reflect on key questions related to why we document; what we document; the need to contextualise documentation to make it meaningful; the crucial role of analysis and interpretation; and the importance of linking documentation and assessment to practice.

Workshop 3: Introduction to the draft tool to support evidence collection

A facilitated discussion about documentation to consider what is worth recording and reflecting on, with a key point that moving beyond simply focusing on developmental milestones and/or areas of concern or deficits is necessary and highlighted in the VEYLDF.

Children's strengths, interests, personal styles and temperament are important to document. As part of thinking specifically about the draft tool, using assessment to inform plans and actions was discussed, with the point made that actions are not limited to planned learning activities, but are much broader and might include conversations, interactions, modifications to the environment and discussions with families and/or colleagues.

Discussion about the analysis and interpretation component of the draft tool led to questions about meaning from the child's perspective, the links to Practice Principles, and the importance of considering the context of a child's behaviour, with context understood to include the child's family and culture.

The prompt sheet accompanying the draft tool elicited discussion, with the general point made that the questions and points in the prompt sheet are crucial to making meaning from what is documented.

Following an extended discussion of the draft tool, participants were encouraged to discuss with each other how they anticipated incorporating the draft tool into their projects. This discussion was valuable both for the exchange of ideas and feedback provided among participants and also for the continuing development of genuine partnership relationships as identified in Workshop 1.

Workshop 4

Workshop 4 was held in March 2010 after a three-month interval. It was regarded as a watershed in the Project. Expected samples of use of the draft tool had not been forthcoming, so it was imperative to ensure that participants were clear about expectations and felt supported in their work.

In the workshop, significant time was allocated for a review of the Project, questions and concerns and revisiting content from Workshop 3. As always, developing relationships was an explicit goal for the workshop.

The aims of Workshop 4 were to:

- clarify the challenges, enablers and barriers experienced by the participants
- identify ways to support the participants more effectively.

Both these aims are important for the success of the Project. They provide valuable information for the wider practice-based application of the Project – specifically the use of documentation tools.

A third aim for this workshop was to build participants' confidence in employing an inquiry-based, action research approach to recording and interpreting observations of children's learning and using these records to inform their practice.

To achieve these aims, the workshop was divided into three parts, each addressing one of the aims.

The first part focused on the challenges experienced by the participants, who were invited to share their experiences with the facilitators and the whole group. At this stage in the Project, disappointingly few observations had been collected and many of the individual projects appeared to have stalled. Accounting for this was imperative for the success of the Project.

Demonstrating the genuineness of the facilitators' desire (and need) to understand the reasons for the poor response, the participants were directly asked how the facilitators could support them more effectively. Information provided by the participants has informed the 'Barriers and enablers' section of this report.

As these are detailed in that section, the barriers and enablers are not repeated here, except to note two general points that emerged in this discussion as crucial to documenting evidence of children's learning:

1. the focus is on what children are **learning**, not just what they are **doing**
2. the complexity is in deciding what is worth recording (and analysing), when sometimes the significance of the behaviour is not immediately apparent.

In the second part of Workshop 4, participants were provided with a vignette observational record of a child's learning. This vignette provided a focus for the group to discuss the development and extension of meaningful documentation that includes analysis/interpretation that informs practice. This technique was considered to be particularly valuable in providing a concrete model of the processes involved in assessment, and the participants' feedback was highly positive.

The third part of the workshop consisted of one-on-one mentoring discussions with each participant. The discussion was structured around a prepared script through which the facilitator in her mentor role worked through examples of children's learning participants brought to the workshop. While participants waited for their turn with their mentor, they were encouraged to compare notes and provide each other with feedback in the informal context of a small group of unsupervised peers.

Workshop 5

Workshop 5 focused on encouraging participants to document more examples of evidence of children's learning. Participants were provided with opportunities to mentor each other, and the facilitators supported participants to refine their documentation.

The critical aims of the workshop were to:

- consolidate the progress made in Workshop 4, including continuing to build mentor-participant and participant-participant partnerships
- clarify the variety of possible responses to the 'analysis/interpretation' section of the draft tool
- ensure participants understand the range of possible, meaningful 'actions' that can be recorded in the draft tool.

To these ends, three strategies were used.

1. Group reflection and discussion on the draft tool and, in particular, the use of the Learning and Development Outcomes in interpreting/analysing observations. An additional focus of reflection and discussion was actions and implications for practice and planning as follow-on from assessment, with a focus on the broad range of actions that can be considered. This was initially a revision of previous workshop content, but the discussion was subsequently extended.
2. The use of vignettes as a basis for discussion with the group about the possible uses of the draft tool. The use of vignettes, introduced in Workshop 4, was particularly useful to the group as it provided a concrete example of the use of an observational record, its analysis/interpretation (focused on meaning and learning for the child), followed by actions.
3. The individual mentoring sessions employed in Workshop 5 had also been successfully used in Workshop 4. As in the earlier workshop, participants and mentors regarded this exercise as productive and enjoyable. Participants waiting for their individual sessions were again encouraged to talk with each other, compare notes and provide each other with feedback. The evident enthusiasm with which participants interacted confirmed that this was a valuable and valued experience

Workshop 6

Workshop 6 was the final workshop; a retrospective overview of the workshops was presented to remind participants of the original (and sustained) focus and the aims for the Project. This review of the workshops was used also to reflect on the success of the work of the group in achieving the goals and to invite feedback from participants about their own experience and perceptions of the value of their participation in the Project.

Appendix 2: Overview of workshop delivery – leadership group and birth-to-eight group

The Outcomes Project aimed to support participants to:

- observe, document and analyse examples of evidence that describes what children are doing and explore how this information can be applied as part of a curriculum-cycle process to advance children's learning.
- use evidence of children's learning to consider how children achieve aspects of the outcomes and examine and describe the pathways that a child or groups of children may take when demonstrating knowledge, understanding and competence.

Several processes and strategies were integrated into the workshops to support this learning, including:

- introducing a draft tool for capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of children
- providing targeted feedback to participants on their documentation and analysis of how individual children are demonstrating learning in small-group and individual conferences in workshops
- developing a reflection audit that asked participants in groups of three to reflect on their experiences of using the draft tool for capturing a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of children
- providing video vignettes to support discussion of individual children's pathways into a specific learning experience and to assist participants to practise observing and analysing children's interactions
- offering definitions and indicators of Learning Outcomes
- providing readings that offered a range of perspectives and theories for analysing evidence of children's learning.

These processes assisted the Project leaders to see first-hand the struggles that participants faced in documenting and analysing children's learning. Many participants, for example, tended to write the observation in the analysis section of the draft tool rather than identifying what children had learnt. Information described what children were 'doing' rather than what they were 'learning'. They were struggling to see that analysis involved highlighting what the children had learned.

These participants were able to talk about what learning children had demonstrated when asked but were not in the habit of putting it in writing as part of the curriculum cycle process. A variety of strategies assisted Project leaders to support participants to refine their skills in analysis across several workshops. In the evidence collected it was clear that participants had adapted the VEYLDF in ways that suited their documentation of children's learning within their contexts.

Through their evidence, participants had noted new ways of expressing what learning looked like for individual children in their settings, provided clear links between children's learning to a number of Outcomes, explored ways of summarising and/or integrating children's prior learning journeys into the format and placed a stronger emphasis on highlighting what children had learned in their analysis sections.

Workshops 1 and 2

In workshops 1 and 2 it was evident that the inclusion of participants from a wide range of services added a richness and depth to discussions. A particular focus was the different challenges that exist for early years professionals in documenting children's achievement of the learning outcomes in the VEYLDF in different settings. These discussions raised awareness among the participants of the diverse challenges that exist for early years professionals in achieving the best possible outcomes for children.

Workshops 3–6

Participants continued to reflect on the value of engaging in professional development with colleagues working in a diverse range of services in the early childhood/years sector in Workshops 3–6. In these sessions they noted they had learned a great deal about the different challenges that existed for professionals across service settings in relation to the implementation of the VEYLDF. In addition they stressed the importance of creating safe contexts in which to discuss issues without feeling judged by others. They believed that this had been achieved in this Project.

The desire to continue this network was specifically noted by one respondent when all participants were asked in the VCAA evaluation survey whether they would like to take part in a follow-up survey or be connected to any regional follow-up networks: 'Being part of a network would be useful to help maintain relationships and manage the various changes that will occur in the early childhood field in the near future.'

Appendix 3: Ethics process

Ethics process for the Outcomes Project

The Outcomes Project 2010–2011 was registered with the DEECD Research Branch for both research in schools and in early childhood settings. The VCAA provided copies of Plain Language Statements to all services taking part in the Project. Information for parents about the Project was provided to all services. All participants and services completed consent forms agreeing to be involved in the inquiry Project. All participants and services used the VCAA/DEECD permission forms for Parent/ Guardian Recording Authorisation and for Adult Recording Authorisation for the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Project (jointly referred to as the Project).

Ethics processes for University of Melbourne

This Project received clearance through a rigorous ethics process at the University of Melbourne and has been approved by the relevant ethics committees at the university and the research branch at the DEECD. This process ensured that participants in the birth-to-eight and leadership groups were informed about how their work was used and confidentiality was ensured at all stages of the Project, and that data was handled, processed and stored appropriately.

It was necessary to clear the methodology with the University of Melbourne Human Ethics Advisory Group. Due to the tight timelines between the tender being accepted and the participants' starting date, the Project was split into two separate ethics applications. The work with educators, including workshops, pre- and post-program measures and mentoring support were deemed minimal risk and as such fast-tracked to enable the Project to begin on time.

Approval was gained for this section of the Project on 27 May 2010 by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) and on 11 June 2010 by the DEECD. Once this clearance was received participants were provided with a Plain Language Statement (PLS) and asked to sign a consent form if they agreed to be involved in the research component of the projects. Participation in the research was voluntary and would not affect one's ability to attend the workshops or receive mentoring support. All participants consented to being part of the research.

The second of the two applications pertained to the evidence of children's learning that would be collected as part of this Project. This required children and families to understand and consent to information about them and their children being shared as part of the research. Approvals for this component of the research were gained on 22 September 2010 from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee and on 26 October 2010 from DEECD. Consent was then sought from children's caregivers for evidence of children's learning to be provided to the research team and the VCAA. Educator participants in the program approached families with PLSs and consent forms developed and approved by the research team, and were responsible for returning the consent forms to the researchers. Where consent was not given by families or children, data was not collected.

The ethics process ensured that all members of the research team were briefed about and bound to their ethical responsibilities. This included maintaining confidentiality and the anonymity of participants, knowing when and how to offer support, and data coding and secure storage. The ethics processes also ensured that participants, and the children and families involved, were represented respectfully and authentically in this research.

Appendix 4: Online pre-test questionnaire for all groups

1. Please fill in all the fields below:
 - Current position in workplace
 - Service type
 - Geographic area (urban or rural)
 - Years at current service
 - Years in early childhood profession
 - Qualifications
2. Gender
 - Female
 - Male
3. To what extent is your work currently informed by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (the VEYLDF)?
 - Not at all
 - A little
 - Moderate
 - Quite a lot
 - Informs all aspects of my work
4. How high a priority has the VEYLDF been in your service?
 - Not at all
 - Low
 - Moderate
 - Quite high
 - Highest priority
5. As a professional, what do you see as the main benefits of the VEYLDF?
6. What value does the VEYLDF have for you as a professional?
7. Briefly describe a situation when you have used the VEYLDF?
8. Have you experienced any challenges in using the VEYLDF? If so, please describe.
9. How confident are you about your understanding of the Practice Principles for Learning and Development and the Outcomes?
 - Family-centred practice
 - Partnerships with professionals
 - High expectations for every child
 - Equity and diversity
 - Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
 - Integrated teaching and learning approaches
 - Assessment for learning and development
 - Reflective practice

How confident are you about your understanding the Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes?

 - Outcome 1 – Children have a strong sense of identity
 - Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 - Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 - Outcome 4 – Children are confident and involved learners

- Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators
 - *Categories:* No confidence
Low confidence
Good confidence
High confidence
- 10.** How confident are you that you have the knowledge and skills to use the eight Practice Principles for Learning?
- Family-centred practice
 - Partnerships with professionals
 - High expectations for every child
 - Equity and diversity
 - Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
 - Integrated teaching and learning approaches
 - Assessment for learning and development
 - Reflective practice
 - *Categories:* No confidence
Low confidence
Good confidence
High confidence
- 11.** Give a brief example of how you have used one or more Practice Principles for Learning and Development.
- 12.** What additional knowledge and skills would help you use the Practice Principles for Learning and Development?
- 13.** How confident are you that you have the knowledge and skills to support the children's learning and development as outlined in the Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes?
- Outcome 1 – Children have a strong sense of identity
 - Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 - Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 - Outcome 4 – Children are confident and involved learners
 - Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators
 - *Categories:* No confidence
Low confidence
Good confidence
High confidence
- 14.** Provide an example of how you have supported children's learning and development in an area identified in the Learning and Development Outcomes.
- 15.** What additional knowledge and skills would help you support children's learning and development in one or more areas identified in the Learning and Development Outcomes?
- 16.** How confident are you that you have the knowledge and skills to assess children's learning and development in relation to the Learning and Development Outcomes?
- Outcome 1 – Children have a strong sense of identity
 - Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 - Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 - Outcome 4 – Children are confident and involved learners
 - Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators
 - *Categories:* No confidence
Low confidence
Good confidence
High confidence

17. Give an example of how you have assessed children's learning and development in the areas identified in the Learning and Development Outcomes.
18. What additional knowledge and skills would help you assess children's learning and development in one or more areas identified in the Learning and Development Outcomes?
19. Briefly describe the ways you work in partnerships/collaborate with families. Give some examples of this.
20. How confident are you that you have the knowledge and skills to work in partnerships/collaborate with families?
 - *Categories:* No confidence
 - Low confidence
 - Good confidence
 - High confidence
21. What additional knowledge and skills would help you to work in partnerships/collaborate with families?
22. What particular topics in the VEYLDF interest you the most?
23. What knowledge and skills do you hope to gain by participating in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Outcomes Project?
24. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix 5: Evaluation survey for all groups

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Outcomes Project 2010–2011

Evaluation survey – April 2011

Background information

The Outcomes Project 2010–2011 is a key implementation activity using an inquiry-based model of professional learning to:

- consider what children are demonstrating in the five Learning and Development Outcomes from birth-to-eight years
- examine and analyse in depth the learning and development outcomes
- use a range of resources to support documentation and analysis of children's learning.

Purpose of the evaluation survey

The purpose of this survey is to seek your feedback on the Outcomes Project 2010–2011:

- what worked best to support your learning
- workshop changes you would recommend
- ongoing connections you would like to support your work with children and families.

Your feedback will provide the Early Years Unit with the information we need to:

- refine this professional learning model for new Project participants in 2012
- publicise the findings from the Outcomes Project 2010–2011
- highlight the challenges and opportunities explored in documentation and analysis of children's learning in the five Outcomes
- support communities of practice to further implement the Victorian Framework.

1. Name: (Optional)

2. Indicate your service type:

<input type="checkbox"/> Family day care	<input type="checkbox"/> Funded kindergarten program
<input type="checkbox"/> Long day care	<input type="checkbox"/> Playgroup
<input type="checkbox"/> Out of school hours care	<input type="checkbox"/> Early intervention
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Maternal and Child Health

3. Indicate the Outcomes Group you participated in:

Birth-to-three Birth-to-eight Leadership

4. Indicate which Outcomes Group workshops you attended:

1	2	3	4	5	6
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5. How useful did you find the Outcomes Project overall? Please circle and explain your response.

1 Not useful at all 2 Rather useful 3 Useful 4 Quite useful 5 Very useful

Comments:

6. (a) As a result of participating in the Outcomes Project, has your practice changed? Yes / No

If so, how? What has contributed to this change?

(b) How has your involvement in the Outcomes Project influenced your work with children, families, colleagues, and/or community?

Children

Families

Community

Colleagues

7. (a) Has the draft tool helped you:

- Make early learning and development more visible?

Please describe:

- Document evidence to support ongoing planning for children's learning?

Please describe:

- Analyse evidence of children's learning?

Please describe:

- In your interactions with children?

Please describe:

- Plan learning opportunities for your specific service type(s)?

Please describe:

- Have conversations with families about their children's learning?

Please describe:

- Other

Please describe:

7 (b) Would you recommend any changes to the draft tool? Yes / No

If yes, what changes would you suggest and why?

8. To support you in collecting evidence of children's learning, rate the following workshop approaches that were most useful. (Rate 1 to 6 with 6 being most useful)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Focus on the inquiry question (in Workshops 1 & 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mentor support between workshops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Focus on mentoring within Workshops 4 & 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Partnerships with Project leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Collaborative learning with colleagues | <input type="checkbox"/> | Background reading for workshops |

Comments:

Communities of practice

9. How and what would support you to continue to develop your pedagogical practices and maintain and extend relationships with colleagues?

Please explain:

Invitation to participate

10. Would you like to take part in a VCAA follow-up survey in 3 months and be connected to any regional follow-up meetings and networks? Yes/No

Please comment:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation survey

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VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

41 St Andrews Place East Melbourne Victoria 3002 Australia

TELEPHONE +61 3 9651 4300 FACSIMILE +61 3 9651 4324

EMAIL vcaa@edumail.vic.gov.au

WEB www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

