# Connecting your practice to the VEYLDF: A conversation with Professor Susanne Garvis

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| How does the VEYLDF support you to work with high expectations for all children? |

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) upholds the image of the child as a rights holder and as a competent learner with capabilities to learn from birth. This means it is the right of every child to a high-quality education that supports their individual learning. By acknowledging this expectation for all children, educators advocate that each child’s prior experiences prepare them for learning and development opportunities. An important question to ask is around ‘equivalence’. Do all children have a high-quality ‘equivalent’ education that allows them to reach their fullest potential?

When an educator has high expectations for all children, they are also more likely to take responsibility for providing opportunities that will provoke the next steps in children’s learning. This means thinking about and reflecting on how best to support each child. For example, if a child is currently not able to complete a task or engage fully in an experience, the educator is able to provide support and encouragement that then enables the child to persist and experience success.

When educators think about ways to support the child’s learning, it is important that they consider the design and organisation of the learning environment. This includes looking at the placement of resources, types of resources, interest centres, interactions, and transitions. For example, are there a variety of math materials that promote the areas below?

* Counting/comparing quantities (games that require children to figure out more or less, playing cards, dominoes, written numbers matched to quantities)
* Measuring/comparing sizes, including fractions (measuring cups and spoons, balance scales, rulers, tape measures, height charts, games with parts to divide and put back together)
* Shapes (shapes, puzzles, magnetic shapes, patterns)

Another area to consider and reflect upon is the place and frequency of transitions in the child’s day. Children are engaged in active transitions throughout their day, from when they enter the early childhood setting through to when they leave. Children will transition multiple times as they move between activities and routines. For example, if the transition is from one activity to the next, was it smooth, or did the child need additional support from an adult to assist them to resettle at a new experience? Does the child respond differently if it is an ‘individual’ transition, compared to a ‘group’ transition? Was there a specific learning focus to the transition (such as a song sung during the transition to promote counting or a specific rhyming word combination)? Can the transition be individualised? Staff are also part of transitions in program structures. Were staff prepared and organised for a new activity and able to support children to transition without a prolonged wait period?

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| Sensitive and responsive practice |

The VEYLDF is supported by eight Practice Principles. One of the intentions of the Practice Principles is to guide early childhood professionals to respond sensitively and positively to each child. What does this look like?

With very young children (birth to three years), consider the types/style of conversations you are having with them, and how many ‘turns’ there are in the conversation. Do you engage with all children in the group? Are there opportunities in routines (such as nappy changes) where you can continue to engage in positive conversations with the child? It is important to remember that conversations with very young children may not involve talking in the way we typically think about conversation, but may involve sounds such as cooing or babbling, and gestures such as smiling, waving or pointing.

For children entering early childhood settings for the first time, it is also important to allow time to support the transfer of primary attachment from the caregiver to the educator. For some children this will take a small amount of time and appear almost seamless, while for other children it may take longer and require more intentional and explicit support from the educator. Part of understanding the attachment transfer is to recognise the importance of familiarity for the child. You may be able to establish rosters to ensure one educator consistently greets the caregiver and child each morning and another is there at the end of each day. It is important to engage in continual reflection around the overall experience of the young child to enable you to implement practices that are sensitive and responsive. Such considerations will also support building positive relationships with families. Families come to understand and become involved in the early childhood setting.

For older children, it is important to reflect on how assessment and feedback is provided to children and their families so that all children experience success. One area of reflection is the use of learning journals. Are learning journals accessible to children? Are children engaged in productive conversations around their learning trajectories: for example, by being encouraged to reflect on artwork they have produced and other forms of documentation? Can these reflections on learning be shared with families? The key is to allow children to talk about their own outcomes in relation to their learning.

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| Responsive relationships with all children |

Children are confident and involved learners. According to the VEYLDF, ‘Responsive learning relationships with all children support them to learn successfully. They are encouraged to be enthusiastic and curious about their learning.’ As educators we can bring these two dispositions of enthusiasm and curiosity to life in our daily work with children.

As educators, it is important that we are able to model dispositions such as creativity, curiosity, problem-solving and enthusiasm for learning. This can be done through active questioning (sustained shared thinking) and engaging with things that are of interest to the child. As educators we may not have the answer to a question that a child poses, but we can model to the child how to seek information that will support an answer to their question: for example, ‘I don’t know that answer, but let’s look it up together in the nature book on insects.’

Another area of consideration is the balance between structured and unstructured learning throughout the child’s day. We know that learning programs that build upon children’s interests and ideas and make use of both intentional and spontaneous teaching moments throughout the day provide the best outcomes for children. You might want to consider entering children’s play episodes and scaffolding new concepts (for example, by introducing new vocabulary that will extend their play and thinking). When the educator enters these moments with children, they are able to engage with and support the children in their learning, within an area that the child has usually chosen because it is of interest to them. The role of the educator is to think about how these spontaneous teaching moments can be entered into throughout the day.

Balance is the key throughout the day; try to find some balance as you provide opportunities for child- and teacher-initiated learning activities, and transition or routine tasks that are responsive to the different capabilities and understandings of children.

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| Shared understandings |

As educators, it is important we engage in reflective practice. We know that positive outcomes for children are more likely when educators engage in reflective practice. Reflective practice plays an important part in our daily lives with children and their families.

A key for reflective practice is to focus on a specific goal, looking at how something might be addressed as well as the possible consequences. By being involved in reflective practice, as an educator you are also committing to the learning cycle of planning, monitoring practice, evaluating and re-visiting. You will continually question, reflect on and be curious about how you are able to support children’s learning and development.

It is important to have an agreed understanding that you will be open and honest in sharing knowledge and perspectives with colleagues. Colleagues may be able to observe elements that you do not when you are interacting with a child, or perhaps they may notice something in a play episode with a child outside while you are inside with other children. Open dialogues are important in supporting reflective practice to enhance learning and development for all children.

Another area to consider for reflective practice is the use of mapping. You might map the different areas of the early childhood setting where the children engage and spend time, as well as where in the setting the educator is engaged and spending time. For example, is more time spent in some areas than others? How often do children and educators interact across the space? Where do children’s interactions take place in the space? Do educators interact with every child during the day?

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| Using the VEYLDF to inform your practice |

As part of the National Law and the National Quality Standards, the VEYLDF is an approved learning framework. As an approved learning framework, it has the potential to make you a better educator and your practice more contemporary.

The VEYLDF allows us to reflect on learning and development outcomes for children. As educators, we can reflect on our own practice in supporting all children by considering if our work aligns with the Practice Principles. The VEYLDF also provides us opportunities to inform our pedagogical decisions and to critique or challenge our existing practices.

Finally, the VEYLDF also provides a shared language and understanding for all early childhood professionals and can inform conversations with families, colleagues and other professionals working with young children.

*This Fact Sheet was developed by Professor Susanne Garvis*

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#### Additional resources that might be useful.

Download copies of [VCAA early years resources](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/Index.aspx).

Order [free hard copies](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/Birth-to-8years.aspx) of VCAA early years resources.

Sign up to the [VCAA Early Years Alert](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/veyldf/Pages/Index.aspx#:~:text=For%20news%20about%20VEYLDF%20resources%20and%20professional%20learning%2C%20subscribe%20to%20the%20Early%20Years%20Alert).

Keep up to date with new resources and professional learning opportunities by subscribing to the [VCAA Early Years Alert](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/veyldf/Pages/Index.aspx#:~:text=For%20news%20about%20VEYLDF%20resources%20and%20professional%20learning%2C%20subscribe%20to%20the%20Early%20Years%20Alert).

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