Karen Hope:

You've previously talked in our previous webinar about being open to noticing children. And it's the practice of noticing or a pedagogy of noticing, if you like, that will guide what you document that ultimately becomes rich and meaningful. So how might we better develop our noticing skills?

Mary Holwell:

You know, Karen, I've thought about this and I think there are so many ways, but they kind of all join together in a strange way. So, it's a tricky question to answer, but I think it is an incredibly important question for me to try and provide an answer to. And you're right, in the questions that I've already answered, I've touched on this a little bit and now I want to try and cement some of that thinking a little bit.

Mary Holwell:

I think one of the really important things that will support better noticing skills is for educators to develop a knowledge of trajectories of children's learning and development. By that I mean, educators need to be familiar enough to notice when a child has moved to a new stage of development. And what is that new stage telling you, and what are the opportunities that will come from that? So, it's not just thinking about ages and stages development, but it's thinking also about content development within specific areas of knowledge, as well. I don't want to encourage people to go back to a model of, "Well, at six months, the child should do this. And at 12 months, the child should do that." But rather, a knowledge of just what happens before the next thing, or what happens after the thing that you're seeing at the moment.

Mary Holwell:

I think it's incredibly important for adults in the room to be attuned to children and their interests. And this takes time, we need to make space for noticing. It's important that we avoid getting bogged, for want of a better word, in routines and have that dominate all of our interactions within the room. For those necessary routines, I think we should see them as opportunities for learning and noticing. Think about the things that you might be able to observe in a child. If you're asking them to help you prepare a table for lunch, can they put a cup at every place mat or at every seat? Can they demonstrate that idea of one-to-one correspondence through that task? Even some straight counting and just working, can the child choose three of this, and two of that? What are they like at remembering the instructions that you're giving?

Mary Holwell:

Then there are the much younger child, can they anticipate a rhyme or a game that you might consistently provide, maybe at a nappie change or at some other routine time. Are they using their body to tell you that they know what's going to happen next, and there's that sense of excitement in there. Are you noticing attempts at independence, perhaps at rest time where children are trying to put their own shoes and socks on. Are children indicating an awareness and understanding of the routine of the day, and a beginning to be able to predict. So, there are lots of opportunities in that routine time.

Mary Holwell:

I also think that it's very important that you make time for interactions with small groups of children, groups of two, groups of three, where you can engage in conversation and it takes you back to that idea of being attuned to children and their interests. I think it's important that you regularly review what you've recorded about children, so that you don't continue to notice the same things over and over. You need to broaden your view. The other thing is I think that it's worthwhile, going back to the VEYLDF learning and development outcomes, and those key components of learning that sit underneath each outcome. And work with your colleagues, engage in some rich conversations to brainstorm other ways a child might be displaying evidence of progress in relation to that outcome. The examples that are provided, those evidence statements, where it says "this might be evident when", are really just that they are examples, they are not exhaustive. So, unpacking and thinking about the outcomes will help you broaden the kinds of things that you notice.

Mary Holwell:

I think too, that it's important that you work hard... or effectively. We all work hard. That you constantly think about building your knowledge for specific curriculum content areas. Become familiar with trajectories of children's development in language, in numeracy, in the visual arts, in their dispositions for scientific thinking. There are so many ways that you can be thinking about those things and using them to guide your practice.

[Copyright Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Copyright.aspx) 2020