

Report on the trial and validation of the draft of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework from Birth to Eight Years (August to October 2009)

December 2009

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Appreciation and acknowledgement are extended to everyone who participated in the trial and validation process by sharing their views about the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for Children from Birth to Eight Years: A draft for trial and validation, August to October 2009 (VEYLDF)*.

Special thanks are extended to:

- the early years trial site managers, school principals and early childhood professionals who participated in the intensive trial and structured interviews over such a short timeframe
- the members of the Practitioner Advisory Group (PAG) who responded to two surveys during the trial period
- the children whose perspectives were recorded by some of the members of the PAG
- the managers, principles, stakeholders, early childhood professionals, parents and students who spent time completing online feedback forms
- the families and stakeholder groups who participated in focus group discussions and meetings to share their views and ideas
- the trial site support personnel who visited the early years trial sites and collected the interview material presented in this report.

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Executive summary

This document reports the findings from the trial and validation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). The information reported in this document is intended to be used to strengthen the VEYLDF so that it addresses the needs of those who work with children from birth to eight years.

The report is also designed to identify the support required for effective implementation of the VEYLDF from 2010.

Background

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released the draft VEYLDF for children aged from birth to eight years for trial and validation on 6 August 2009.

The VEYLDF is designed to:

- assist families and early childhood professionals to guide children's learning and development from birth to eight years of age
- support children's transitions into and between early childhood education and care services, and school
- support a partnership approach between families and all others who work with children.

The purpose of the trial and validation was to:

- document the views and experiences of early childhood professionals as they interpreted the VEYLDF
- identify the support required for implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010
- generate examples of current and emerging practice.

Methodology

The empirical data that forms the basis of this report was gathered from the following multiple sources through a range of data gathering techniques.

- interview sites – managers, principals and early childhood professionals from 21 early years services participated in intensive interviews
- survey sites – 21 early childhood professionals from the PAG committed to undertake two surveys this trial. The external evaluators received 18 of the first survey and 17 of the second survey by the end of the trial timeframe.

- 94 respondents provided online feedback
- 63 participants contributed to focus group discussions, including families, playgroup coordinators and supported playgroup coordinators, maternal and child health (MCH) coordinators, and representatives from Victorian cultural organisations
- 39 children participated in individual interviews or small group consultations

Key messages

The synthesis of the data from these components revealed that there is broad support for the VEYLDF. Early childhood professionals recognised that the implementation of the VEYLDF will strengthen their practice and improve consistency across early years services that work with children from birth to eight years. However, concern was expressed about the potential burden of implementation on early years services and its workforce.

There is broad support for the VEYLDF

The Learning Outcomes and Practice Principles included in the VEYLDF were seen to be highly relevant to the work of early childhood professionals and relevant for families.

Early childhood professionals recognise that the VEYLDF will strengthen their practice

The common language promoted in the VEYLDF will support more effective communication across services and with families.

Early childhood professionals will gain a clearer voice and a higher level of recognition for the professional basis of their work.

Principals and teachers valued the consistent alignment of the VEYLDF with Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).

Transitions to schools and between services will be improved and communication about transitions will be more uniform.

There is concern about implementation of the VEYLDF

Participants in this trial expressed concern about the impact of implementation on their services. They noted that the implementation of the VEYLDF will be positioned alongside implementation of other reforms and accountability expectations.

Early childhood professionals emphasised a need for clarity about the expectations and a need for resources to support practical application of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes.

Recommendations for implementation

1. It will be important to stage implementation to support early childhood professionals' work and achieve commitment to the VEYLDF. Given the importance of building a culture of reflective practice, staged implementation will allow progressive feedback on implementation successes and challenges.
2. Tailored resources will be required to meet the needs of differing groups and early years services, including schools, FDC, LDC and OSHC. The cultural diversity of early childhood professionals and the diversity of children and families will require resources that are specific to their needs and that support practical application.

The trial and validation of the VEYLDF has already fostered a change in practice among services that have been involved in this trial. The first steps have been well considered and have proven to be appreciated by those participating in this trial. It is important that the next steps are also well considered and managed.

Section 1: Context and background

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) Early Years Unit was established in April 2008. The VCAA is responsible for the development, trial and validation, and implementation of the VEYLDF for all children from birth to eight years in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Victorian Children's Council.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released the draft VEYLDF for trial and validation on 6 August 2009.

The VEYLDF is designed to:

- assist families and early childhood professionals to guide children's learning and development from birth to eight years of age
- support children's transitions into and between early childhood education and care services, and school
- support a partnership approach between families and all others who work with children.

The VEYLDF complements the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) birth to five years. It links the five learning outcomes from the national EYLF with learning and teaching provided in the VELs, the Victorian school curriculum.

- VEYLDF takes a broad and contemporary view of learning and development. It incorporates both formal and informal learning, acknowledges the linkages among a broad range of multidisciplinary professionals and recognises that families are the first and most important teachers of children. It is envisaged that the implementation of the VEYLDF will improve the continuity and consistency of approaches adopted with children, and facilitate greater understanding of the importance of the early years for everyone involved in children's learning and development.

In August 2009 the VCAA coordinated an intensive trial and validation of the draft VEYLDF in order to identify the support and resources required for implementation in 2010. Stakeholder groups were identified and a range of opportunities provided for input during the trial period.

Section 2: Components of the trial and validation

The purpose of the trial and validation¹ was to:

- capture the thoughts and experiences of early childhood professionals as they interpreted the VEYLDF
- identify the support required for implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010
- generate examples of current and emerging practice.

Methodology and participants in trial process

Key stakeholder groups involved in provision of education and care of children from birth to eight years were offered a range of ways to provide feedback on the VEYLDF over the trial period.

The empirical data that forms the basis of this report was collected between August and October 2009 from:

- interview sites – managers, principals and early childhood professionals from 21 early years services participated in intensive interviews
- survey sites – 21 early childhood professionals from the PAG committed to undertake two surveys. The external evaluators received 18 of the first survey and 17 of the second survey by the end of the trial
- 94 respondents who provided online feedback about the VEYLDF
- 63 participants contributed to focus group discussions, including parents, playgroups coordinators and supported playgroups coordinators, MCH coordinators, and representatives of cultural organisations
- 39 children participated in individual interviews or small group consultations.

These five trial components generated a large amount of rich information that provided a view of the VEYLDF, and implications for implementation in 2010.

The authors of this report, two independent evaluation consultants, analysed the raw data provided by the VCAA. While this report summarises findings from all components of the trial, it emphasises findings from the in-depth trial with interview trial sites, and from the PAG survey trial sites. Reliability in-

formation pertaining to data from these sites can be viewed in Appendix 3: The strengths and limitations of the data.

Interview trial sites

Twenty-one early years services were involved in an in-depth trial of the VEYLDF.

Early years services represented in the trial included family day care (FDC), primary schools, funded kindergarten programs in a range of settings, outside school hours care (OSHC), and long day care centres (LDC).

Early years services that were not included in the Round 1 trial of the EYLF for Australia (that is, primary schools, FDC, OSHC) were specifically targeted for inclusion in this trial. Given the diverse range of early years services in Victoria, it was considered important to document the relevance and appropriateness of the VEYLDF for those working with children from birth to eight years across the spectrum. Appendix 1 lists the interview trial sites.

Interview trial sites were provided with a briefing session before the trial commenced in August 2009. This briefing session highlighted the purpose of the trial, and the requirements of data collection.

A support person, an experienced early childhood professional, was appointed to visit each interview trial site. Appendix 1 lists the support personnel for interview trial sites. Support personnel conducted three structured interviews (see templates in Appendix 2) over the trial timeframe.

In part, the inclusion of a support person to conduct the interviews was initiated as an acknowledgement of the demands of the trial on the early childhood professionals' time. Support personnel visited the site on two occasions to conduct the interviews. Interview trial sites were provided with backfill for the time taken to conduct the early childhood professional interview. The support person undertook the role of keeping a written record of the interview in consultation with the interviewee. Interview trial sites expressed appreciation for the support provided in having the conversation with the support person and being relieved of any responsibility of having to document their participation.

The initial visit by the support person was designed to identify views about the VEYLDF and to explore current practice in relation to the three Practice Principles and five Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF.

The first visit involved two interviews: one with the manager/principal of the early years service, (Template 2: Appendix 2) and one with a nominated early childhood professional working directly with

¹ The trial and validation is referred to as, the trial, from this point.

children at the site (Template 3: Appendix 2).

The second interview was conducted at the end of the trial period with the early childhood professional (Template 4: Appendix 2). The interview documented insights into how the early childhood professional may have been shaping their program and/or practice in light of their reflections on the VEYLDF. The interview also focused on identifying the support that early childhood professionals will require to successfully implement the VEYLDF in 2010.

The reports from each interview were written by the support person and sent to the interviewee for verification before being sent to the independent consultants for analysis. This provided an opportunity for the interviewee to provide additional detail or clarify points. Support personnel who conducted the interviews also compiled a short overview of the service to provide additional context.

Practitioner advisory group (PAG) survey trial sites

Twenty-one sites were recruited from the EYLF PAG. These early childhood professionals had previously participated in the trial of the EYLF. It was believed that they would provide a valuable perspective on the VEYLDF given their knowledge of the EYLF and their involvement in the Round 1 trial of the EYLF.

Appendix 1 lists the PAG survey trial sites. The PAG attended a briefing meeting before the commencement of the trial and also participated in a support meeting during the trial period.

These early childhood professionals completed two surveys during the trial. The surveys were similar in content and form to the structured interviews undertaken by early childhood professionals in the Interview Trial sites. These surveys, however, did not include the manager's perspectives.

Complete data were received from 17 of the 21 early childhood professionals from the PAG survey trials. This data formed the basis of the analysis of PAG responses that is reported in this document.

Children

As outlined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12)*, children have a right to be consulted about matters that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account. The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* supports this intention at a State level. Additionally, the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics* guides early childhood professionals to include children's perspectives in the curriculum.

To recognise this right, the addition of children's perspectives was believed to be an important inclusion in the trial. To facilitate the gathering of children's views, members of the PAG Survey Trial sites were asked to consult with children about one outcome of the VEYLDF.

The aims of the consultations were to:

- provide the opportunity to explore meanings of the VEYLDF outcomes with children
- support children's agency and active citizenship throughout the process
- acknowledge children's active role in their own learning.

Four PAG sites responded to the invitation to document children's perspectives. The PAG early childhood professional in each of the four sites selected one Learning Outcome as a focus to consult with children and gather their perspectives and views on learning. Table 1 provides a summary of the Learning Outcomes selected and the age of the children involved in the discussions.

Table 1: Learning Outcomes and Context – children's voices

Learning Outcome	Trial site	Age of children
Community	Long day care (integrated service)	2–5 years
Wellbeing	Funded kindergarten program	4–5 years
Learning	Out of school hours care school holiday program	5–8 years
	Funded kindergarten program	4–5 years

Data were collected from 39 children (aged 2–8 years) through individual interviews, photographic documentation, and small group discussions. Findings from this data collection component can be found in Appendix 5.

Focus groups

Sixty-three participants contributed feedback in focus group discussions. Focus groups were conducted with families, MCH, playgroup and supported playgroup coordinators and cultural organisations (such as, Museum Victoria and the State Library).

Focus groups are not generally intended to produce information that is representative of the population, but to provide a range of views held within specific sub-groups of interest.

The overall purpose of the focus groups was to generate information about these groups' perspectives concerning the Learning Outcomes and to document their perspectives of the VEYLDF.

Family focus groups

Managed and facilitated by Ms Marie Gill, Gill and Willcox

Three focus groups were conducted with families. The participant groups were sourced from three trial sites. Twenty-two parents participated in focus group discussions.

Parent participants were sent a letter outlining the purpose of the focus groups and provided with a one page summary that contained an overview of the VEYLDF and a short description of the Learning Outcomes.

The focus groups were facilitated by an experienced researcher with a note taker present to take notes. Each focus group was conducted for 1.5 hours.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to guide the focus group discussion. Questions were developed to generate information about:

- issues of importance to parents of young children
- parents' views of the Learning Outcomes
- strategies parents use to assess the extent to which their children are developing and achieving the Learning Outcomes
- parents' perspectives on the VEYLDF, including implications of the VEYLDF and the most appropriate ways to present information to families/carers on the Learning Outcomes.

Maternal and child health (MCH) nurse coordinators

Sixteen MCH from across Victoria participated in a focus group to provide feedback on the VEYLDF.

MCH nurses emphasise that families are children's first teachers and support parents in maximising their child's development, learning and wellbeing. The early engagement of MCH with the family provides an excellent opportunity for 'teachable moments' and their views of the VEYLDF in supporting their work were considered important to document during the trial.

MCH may have a greater potential to access vulnerable families that may not be participating in other early years services. This relationship is an important connection that facilitates early identification of issues.

The group of MCH coordinators were provided with an overview of the VEYLDF and the work being undertaken on the Council of Australian Governments

reform agenda before the focus group commenced.

Supported playgroup coordinators

Fifteen playgroup coordinators and supported playgroup coordinators attended a focus group to share their views of the VEYLDF. Playgroups provide a significant platform for communication with families as evidenced by their statistics that 54 000 children from 40 000 families attend 3800 playgroup sessions in Victoria every week. Supported playgroups focus on families at risk of vulnerability.

Playgroup and supported playgroup coordinators shared their experiences of working with young children, and highlighted the implications of their work with families to link the formal and informal learning described in the VEYLDF.

Cultural organisations

Eight representatives of various cultural organisations participated in a focus group discussion. Participants attending the focus group represented Zoos Victoria, the State Library, National Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens, Immigration Museum and the Melbourne Museum.

This group explored their view of the VEYLDF as well as the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes included in the document. They also explored opportunities for further collaboration to support implementation in 2010.

Online feedback and written submissions

Provision for online feedback was incorporated into the trial to broaden the potential range of participants in the trial, and to facilitate an opportunity to provide feedback for those unable to attend focus groups or participate in other aspects.

Online surveys were designed to gain feedback from managers/principals, early childhood professionals/teachers, graduate students, families and peak bodies and organisations. There were over 300 hits on the online feedback link with 94 participants providing rich responses to surveys about the VEYLDF.

Written feedback about the VEYLDF was also submitted from key agencies and peak bodies. Contributions were received from a range of sources, including universities (Deakin, Swinburne, RMIT and University of Melbourne), Kindergarten Parents Victoria, Kidsafe, Community Child Care, Melton Shire Council, Institute of Education at the Royal Children's Hospital, and Kids – 'Go for your life' (managed by Cancer Council Victoria and Diabetes Australia). A complete listing of sources of information generated in online feedback is included in Appendix 7.

Section 3: Findings from trial

This section summarises the findings from the in-depth trial. It begins with outlining findings from intensive data collection with managers/principals and early childhood professionals who participated in interviews. The second sub-section summarises findings from surveys completed by the PAG.

This section draws on both quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate the overall views (quantitative grouped data in graphs) of participants and their specific views (thematic analysis of quotes generated in interviews) in order to better communicate both the breadth and depth of information gathered in the trial.

Quantitative data clearly indicates patterns across groups of early childhood professionals and managers/principals, while comments illustrate the meaning attributed by individuals. This triangulation² of quantitative and qualitative data across a range of sources (early childhood professionals, managers/principals and other stakeholders) provides a clear message about what is required to support implementation in 2010.

Interview trial sites and PAG survey trial sites

A diverse range of early years services participated in the trial. For complete details of the services and locations see Appendix 1

Interviews with managers and principals

This section presents a summary of the findings from structured interviews with managers/principals in the interview trial sites.

In the first site visit to the interview sites by support personnel, nine principals were interviewed from nine primary schools, and twelve managers from the twelve early years services.

General views about the VEYLDF

Most managers/principals interviewed were positive about the VEYLDF indicating that it provided a sound basis for implementation. They also reported that the VEYLDF will:

- standardise the consistency of language for early years learning across services and in discussions

² Triangulation is most commonly used to refer to the inclusion of more than one data method or data source to strengthen inferences. In this case the trial included triangulation of data sources (the range of participant groups represented in the trial) and data methods (i.e. interviews, surveys, online feedback and written submissions, and focus groups).

with families establish a more holistic approach to early childhood learning and development.

Two representative quotes are presented below to illustrate the fit of the VEYLDF with the work context of early years services and schools:

‘(It’s) highly relevant – the outcomes relate strongly to students’ positive self image and contributions, thus providing a sound basis for their future. The framework provides opportunities for children to be stimulated and encouraged to become positive effective learners.’

‘We are already doing these things (practice principles) now to an extent. We will not have any difficulty implementing them, but more of a case of building on them.’

Managers of early years services emphasised the potential value of the VEYLDF in enhancing the professionalism of the early years workforce.

Views about the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes

Managers/principals were asked to assess their service and practice against the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes.

The Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Learning and Development Outcomes	Practice Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have a strong sense of identity. • Children are connected with and contribute to their world. • Children have a strong sense of wellbeing. • Children are confident and involved learners. • Children are effective communicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Practice • High Quality Teaching and Learning • Continuous Professional Improvement

Graph 1 illustrates their impressions of how their service was currently addressing the three Practice Principles, the overall Practice Principles, and the Learning Outcomes. There were no notable differences in views between managers and principals. They:

- generally felt their services were doing well addressing the Practice Principles, with all means exceeding seven on a ten-point scale

- saw great importance in the Learning Outcomes to their services
- believed they were doing a good job addressing the Learning Outcomes with a mean of over 7 on ten-point scale
- indicated that the Practice Principle of Collaborative Practice was the least well addressed by their services
- mostly believed they were doing best at addressing continuous professional improvement.

For purposes of illustration this graph is drawn only from 7.1 to 7.7, so the differences would not appear as pronounced had the table been drawn on a scale from 0 to 10.

The challenge of Collaborative Practice

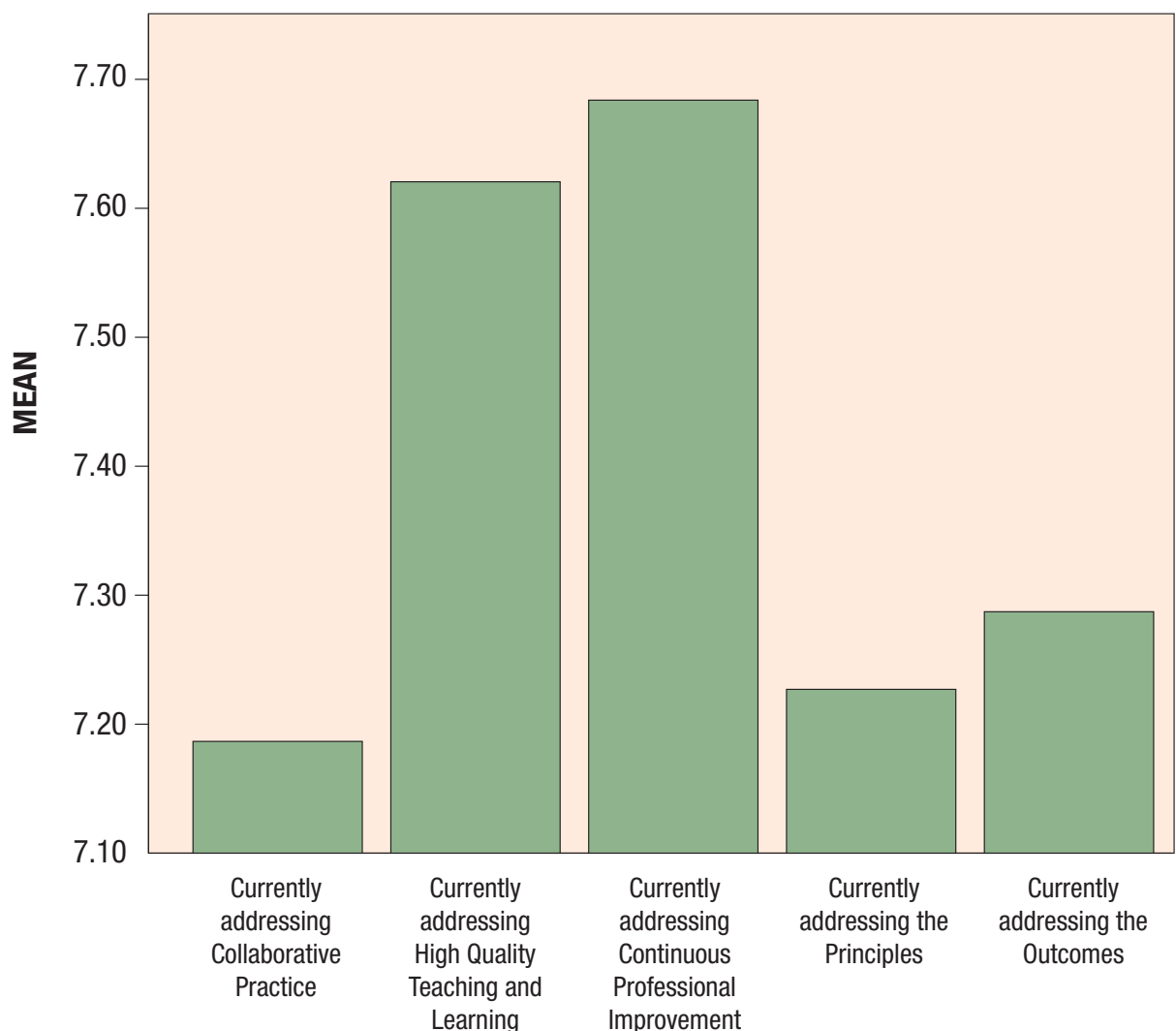
Collaborative Practice is focused on in this section because, as indicated above, this is the area that managers/principals believed they were addressing least well. Collaborative Practice in the VEYLDF pertains

to family-centred practice, partnerships, and equity and diversity. The qualitative data indicates that the term Collaborative Practice may have been interpreted by managers/principals as pertaining exclusively to family-centred practice and communication with families.

When asked what support they would need to improve Collaborative Practice in their service or school, managers/principals gave a range of responses. Most participants focused on strategies for improving Collaborative Practice with families. They saw improving communication with families as key, and a number of managers/principals noted that available resources and time constraints were limiting their ability to focus on this area.

Managers in services that were responsible for younger age children indicated that the VEYLDF may support better collaboration if families gained a better understanding of the professional role that the early childhood professionals play in supporting the learning and development of their children.

Graph 1: Managers/principals first site visit



The insert box below presents comments from managers/principals regarding the challenge of Collaborative Practice. Analysis of these quotes indicates that these individuals believed that at least part of the challenge of Collaborative Practice lies in the quality of the communication with families about the importance of their children's learning and development in the early years.

Challenges of Collaborative Practice

'We need help with our cultural identity, the symbolic bit which is about who we are, and the ways we work together. We have parents who feel isolated because they feel they can't get out of their home; we face cultural differences and language barriers. We need to overcome the strong belief in our community that school is not important.'

'We encounter problems with family-centred practice because community perception is that we are a baby minding service. Parents are not interested in telling us what the children do at home so we can use their interests – they prefer to drop off children, not discuss their development and then leave.'

'The challenge for us in family day care services is to get the message into the community that family day care is a quality child care option. It is not highly publicised and is still often seen as a baby sitting.'

'Some cultural beliefs mean that parents don't see it as their role to work collaboratively with teachers and/or believe teachers are the expert on their child whereas family-centred practice sees the family as the expert.'

'Children being collected by others or going to long day care from kinder limit opportunities to meet with parents.'

Managers/principals noted that parents were often time-poor with little additional time to devote to more active involvement in services or with early childhood professionals and teachers. School principals commented on the challenges of engaging with parents who have an unfavourable perception or experience with schools and with those families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Some principals suggested that services need to rethink the role of families and perhaps find alternate ways to collaborate with families, with a rethink of the teacher's role (for example, families could be included as tutors).

It is clear that the VEYLDF conceptualises Collaborative Practice as a partnership between services and families to support parents' role in learning and development, support diversity and improve equity, and promote exchange among professionals in the best interest of the child.

Support required for implementation

Managers/principals noted the importance of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes, and identified ways their services were addressing these elements of the VEYLDF.

While they were supportive of the VEYLDF, the Practice Principles, and Learning Outcomes, they revealed a level of anxiety and concern about the timelines in relation to what support they will need to implement the VEYLDF in 2010.

One manager sums this theme up well:

'(We need) time to be familiar with them and how the framework applies. (It) doesn't look like a huge change. We are already doing lots of these. The main issue is around the time to truly understand the framework and what it means – this will take discussions with families and staff.'

It appears that managers/principals feel time pressed in relation to the implementation of the VEYLDF. The clear message is that they want support in the form of funding and professional development opportunities for staff. They see great value in the VEYLDF; they feel they are currently doing a fairly good job addressing the Learning Outcomes; and, at the same time, they feel pressed for time and in need of additional support.

Many managers indicated that professional development opportunities were critical to support improvements in planning, programming, and service delivery.

Some managers/principals warned that the VEYLDF may be inappropriately used as a checklist rather than as an overarching framework. The danger of using the VEYLDF as a checklist was highlighted by a manager whose service included a number of children with additional needs:

'If the VEYLDF is used as a checklist and families see it as such, they may be very anxious because their child is not achieving all the things listed. In terms of school readiness, if children have to have achieved all the things in the birth to year five area, it may lead parents to believe that the child needs a second year of kinder. Some parents know that their child may never achieve some of the things described in the outcomes because of the child's disability.'

The implementation of the VEYLDF will be strengthened if the importance of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes is communicated clearly to families and to early childhood professionals. The VEYLDF is not meant to be used prescriptively, but is intended to support professional conversations and reflective practice. Given the diversity of early years services, the message will need to be tailored to different needs and accompanied by practical resources.

Interviews with early childhood professionals

Early childhood professionals were interviewed on two occasions during the trial. The first interview was conducted early in the trial period, with the second interview conducted several weeks later near the end of the trial.

Graph 2 indicates that early childhood professionals believed they were already addressing the Practice

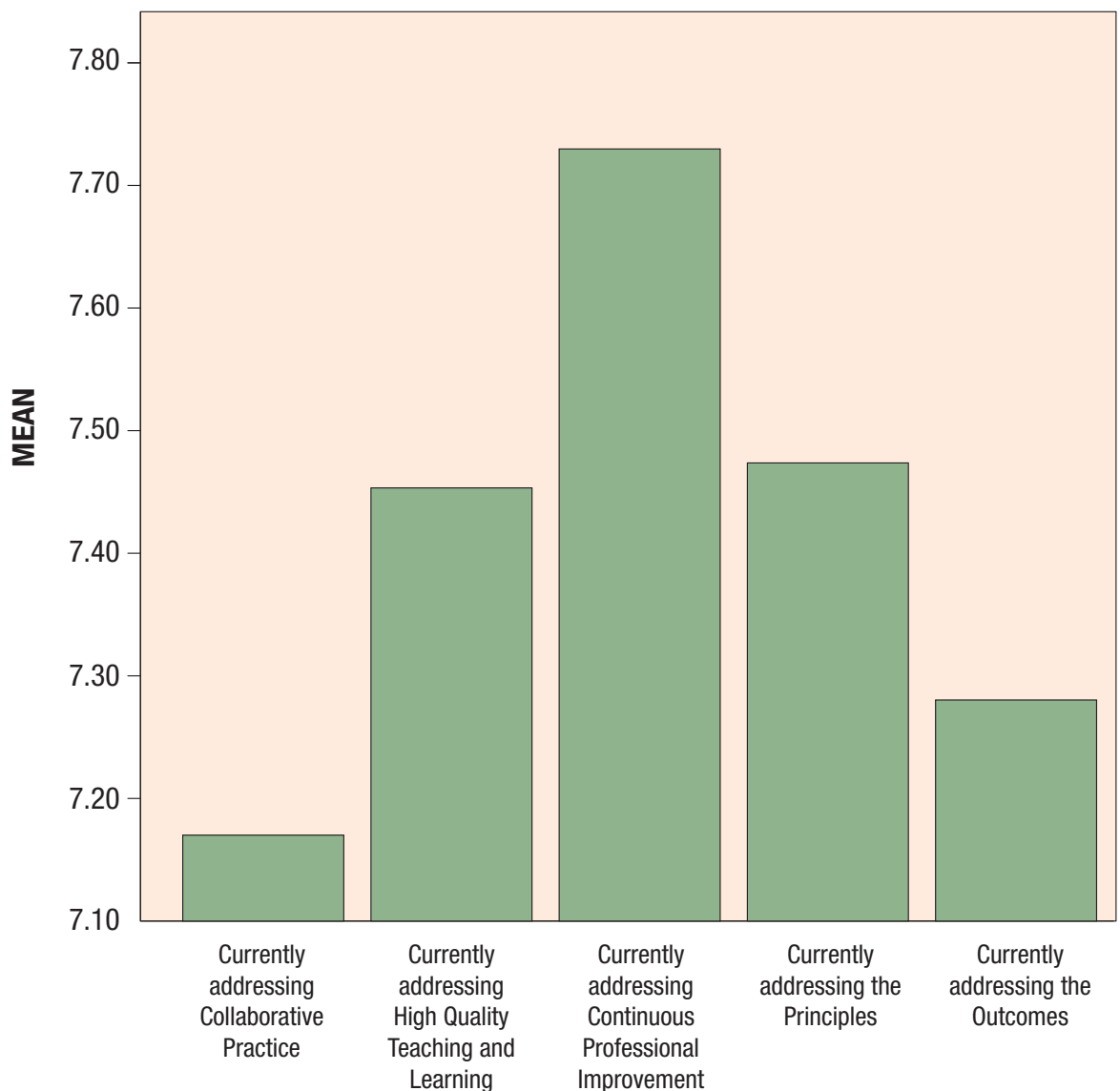
Principles and Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF quite well. The average rating of their current capacity in addressing the Practice Principles was 7.48 and their rating for current capacity to address the Learning Outcomes was 7.32 out of a possible 10.

An initial analysis suggests that early childhood professionals did not believe there was much room for improvement. They were confident they were already applying the Practice Principles and progressing children's learning and development toward the Learning Outcomes

Similar to managers, early childhood professionals identified Collaborative Practice as the principle they were addressing least well. Their overall average rating for Collaborative Practice was 7.19 on a ten-point scale. This indicates that they believed they were already doing a good job on this principle.

Collaborative Practice with families was identified as a particular challenge for those working with children under three years of age. Early childhood

Graph 2:
Interview sites
early childhood
professionals,
first site visit



professionals indicated that it was challenging for a number of reasons, including:

- the ‘busyness’ of parents
- parents’ views that the service was a child minding service and not a learning environment.

Early childhood professionals offered varying suggestions about how Collaborative Practice could be improved in their services. To illustrate the creative ways that early childhood professionals identified solutions during interviews direct quotes are included below:

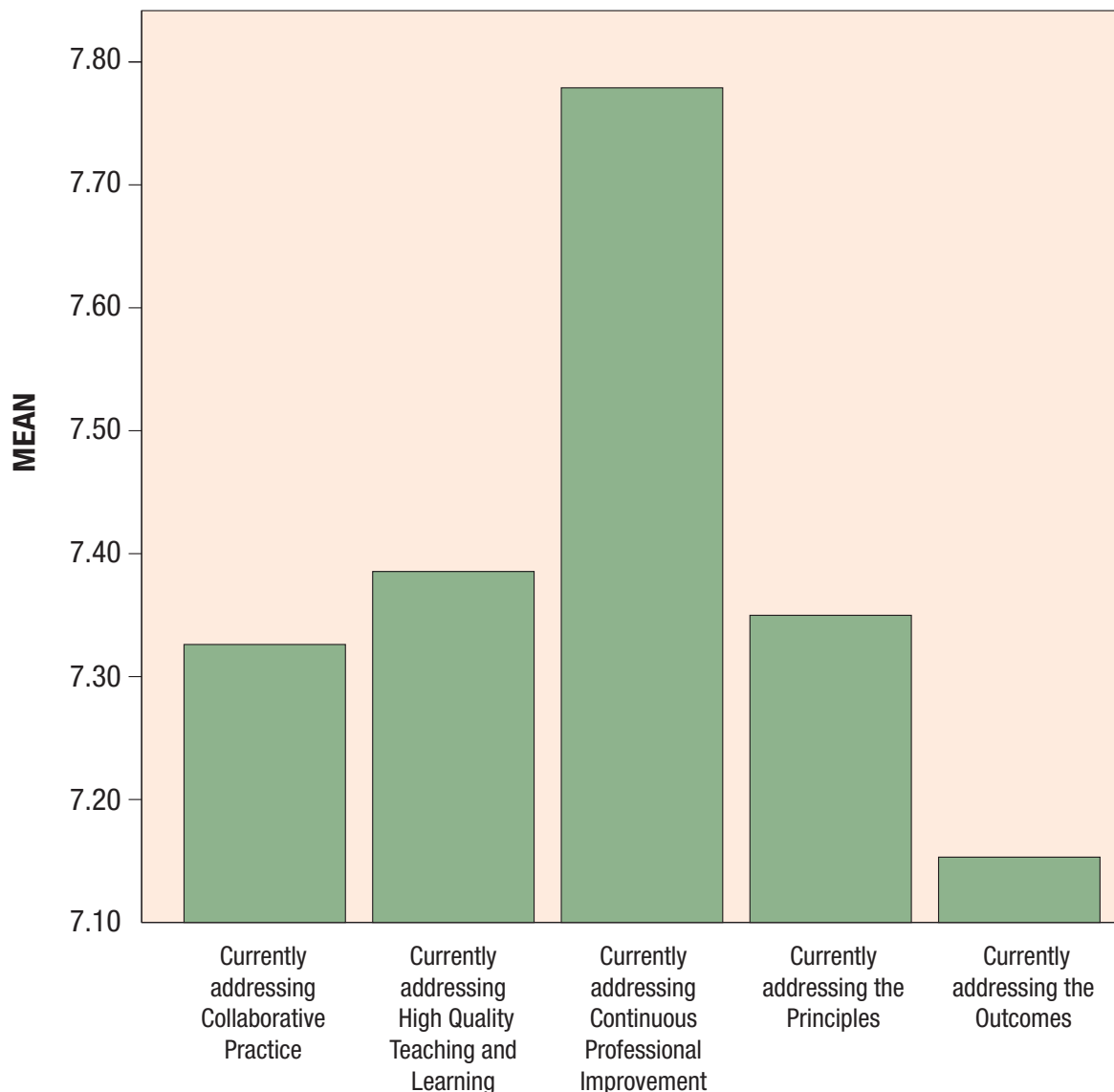
‘(We need) translation and interpreting support. Bilingual support for field workers, particularly to have spontaneous conversations with carers and families.’

‘A structure which supported and enabled sharing of practice between prep teachers and early childhood professionals, e.g. visiting each other’s settings, observation of programs in practice, time to discuss pedagogical issues.’

‘Setting up expectations with families at enrolment about opportunities to discuss their child’s progress.’
‘Home visits would support further understanding of family circumstances.’

Graph 3 illustrates that on the second site visit, near the end of the trial period, there was shift in how well they believed their services were addressing the Practice Principles. During the first interview, early childhood professionals indicated they believed their services were addressing the Practice Principles at 7.48 on a ten-point scale. During the second interview, while they still believed their services were doing a good job addressing the Practice Principles, they rated their services below 7.36 on ten-point scale. Therefore, they rated their services lower on addressing the Practice Principles during the second site visit than they did during the first site visit.

While this shift seems relatively small, the findings are based on group data indicating an overall shift across the group. It is unclear as to why the early childhood professionals changed their opinions



Graph 3:
 Early years practitioner, second site visit

relating to how their services addressed the Practice Principles. It may be that as they became more familiar with the VEYLDF, they felt more comfortable in giving a more critical appraisal of their practice. If this is the case it could be viewed as a positive indication that there is a higher level of awareness to the potential for making improvements.

The other reason for the shift in perceptions may be due to reflection on the shifts in practice that were able to be made during the trial period.

Early childhood professionals at the interview trial sites indicated that their services were currently addressing continuous professional improvement best. This indicates that services believe they were making an attempt to respond to the needs of the early childhood professionals in regards to their professional learning.

It is interesting that even though this is the case, a number of early childhood professionals viewed increasing opportunities for professional development as one of the best ways to continue to improve practice and align their services with the VEYLDF.

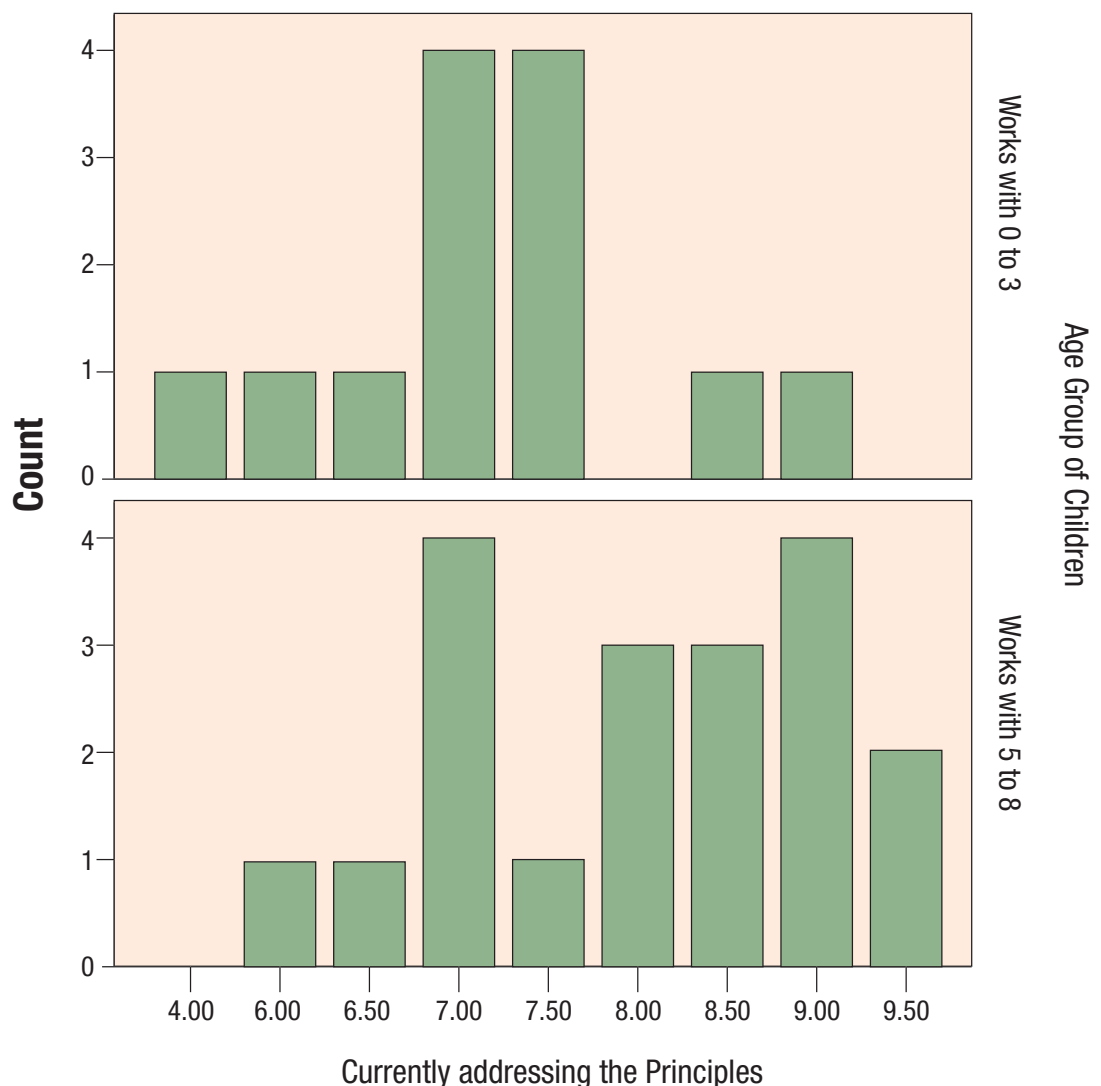
Early childhood professionals who work with children from birth to three years compared to early childhood professionals who work with children five to eight years

Early childhood professionals in the interview trial sites identified the age group of children with whom they worked. The graphs below reveal early childhood professionals who gave each rating for currently addressing the Practice Principles (Graph 4) and currently addressing the Learning Outcomes (Graph 5).

By investigating Graphs 4 and 5, it is clear to see that early childhood professionals who work with children under the age of three believed that their services were not addressing the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF to the same level as those early childhood professionals who work with children from the ages of five to eight years.

This indicates that the VEYLDF is not seen in the same way by early childhood professionals who work with children under the age of three years. It

Graph 4:
Early childhood professionals who work with children aged 0 to 3 compared to early childhood professionals who work with children aged 5 to 8 (Principles)



appears that they did not believe the work they are doing aligns as much with the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes. Some early childhood professionals who work with children under three years of age indicated reservations about the application of the Learning Outcomes in their work. These illustrative quotes are presented below:

‘It’s not clear what we should be focusing on in the Learning Outcomes.’

‘I am unsure if it represents children from birth to three years adequately. A lot of development occurs in this age range and it is a crucial period of a child’s life. (I am) not sure it is appropriate to lump all children in a birth to five year age group.’

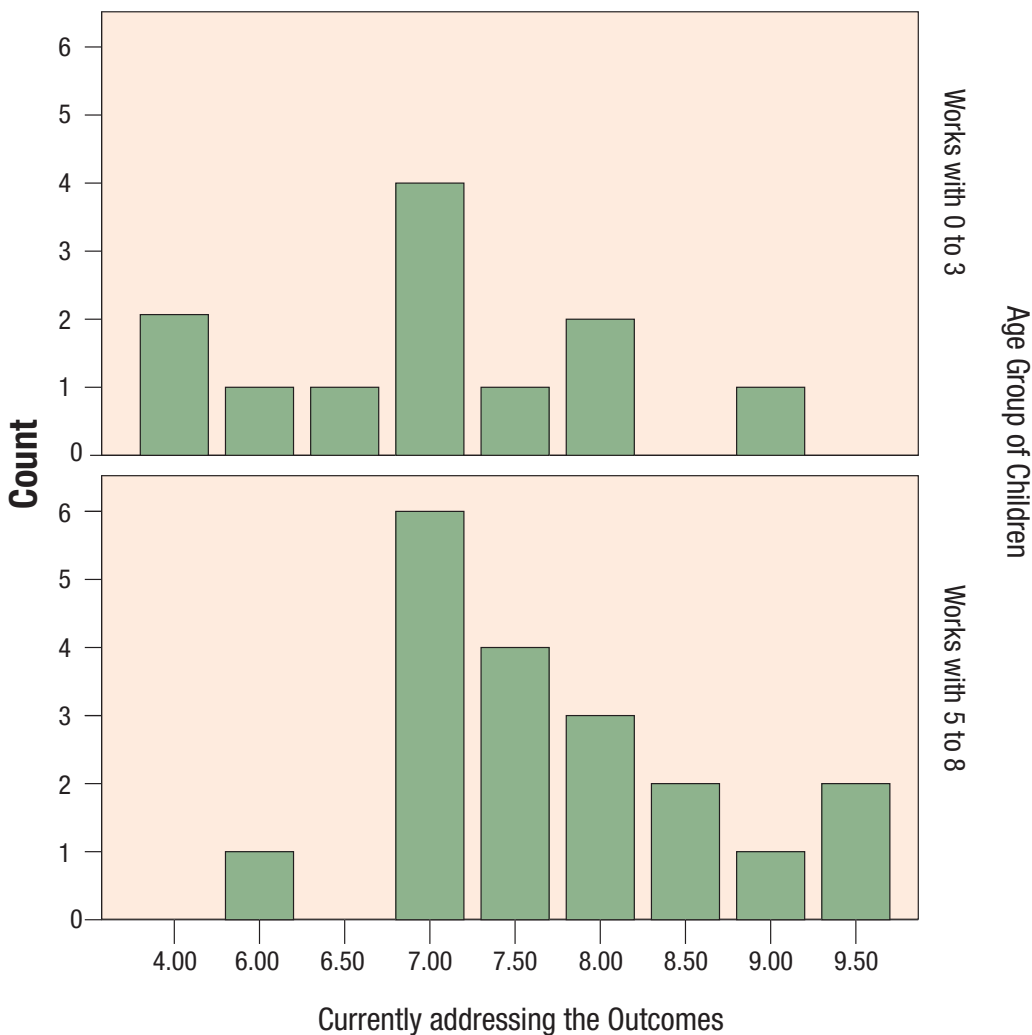
‘I’m concerned that birth to five is too big a range and birth to three may be lost.’

‘In the under threes, we need more on the importance of bonding/attachment.’

Those early childhood professionals working with children from five to eight years old were more confident they were progressing the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes. They indicated that the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes were consistent with the underpinning philosophy of the school. They appeared to emphasise the transition to Prep rather than the implications of the VEYLDF beyond the Prep Year and into Year 1 and 2.

These findings have implications for the implementation of VEYLDF in 2010. Because these groups view the work they do differently, it is likely that specific strategies will be required to support implementation. Support will need to be tailored to service type, practitioner background and experience and context (e.g. regional) to ensure that the relevance of the Learning Outcomes to early childhood professionals’ work is clear.

Graph 5: Early childhood professionals who work with children aged 0 to 3 compared to early childhood professionals who work with children aged 5 to 8 (Outcomes)



Support required for implementation

Early childhood professionals expressed many of the same needs as managers/principals in relation to bringing their services into alignment with the VEYLDF. There is one major area of difference between the early childhood professionals' needs and those of managers/principals.

Early childhood professionals expressed a need for a higher degree of definition in terms of what they are supposed to do relating to the VEYLDF. They want practical direction.

The qualitative data revealed a theme: support is needed by early childhood professionals to better understand specifically how they need to modify their current practice. Early childhood professionals appreciated the value of the VEYLDF, but they were unclear what they needed to do to support its implementation. The following comments by early childhood professionals relating to their needs help illustrate this theme:

- *'Training to specifically understand what will be expected in the implementation.'*
- *'Some examples of high-quality programs, different ways to approach programming.'*
- *'What constitutes a good early childhood program? We need visual information and verbal information, e.g. DVDs for families.'*

It is clear that early childhood professionals want more specificity about what they should do in relation to the VEYLDF. This aligns with the managers/principals' call for further professional development noted above. One early childhood professional's comment in relation to the need for further professional development helps illustrate this view:

- *'(I will need) encouragement, feedback, (and) discussion with a mentor-another professional person.'*
- *'I need help getting started – finding how it (VEYLDF) links to current programming and how to document in the program.'*

Early childhood professionals in school settings highlighted the challenge of implementation of the VEYLDF given the context of other curriculum and accountability expectations (VELS, E5, AEDI, English on Line).

Early childhood professionals' views also mirrored managers/principals regarding their need for additional time to help bring their services into alignment with the VEYLDF.

Changes in perspectives

While the value of the VEYLDF was appreciated by all groups, it can be useful to focus on those who were cautious or held certain reservations about implementation in order to gain insight into how best to support all groups. In relation to the perceived weaknesses of the VEYLDF, there was an interesting and major difference among early childhood professionals from the first site visit to the second site visit.

During the first site visit, a number of early childhood professionals revealed a more cautious acceptance of the VEYLDF. However, during the second site visit, the VEYLDF was generally viewed as a positive step in enhancing the learning and development of children from birth to eight years. The tone of comments regarding the VEYLDF between the two visits had changed.

During the first site visit, the comments related more to the generic value of the VEYLDF. There appeared to be a real question among a number of early childhood professionals in relation to whether the VEYLDF would bring improvement, or not. Their comments were more dismissive of the entire concept of a framework. Early childhood professionals initially raised concerns about how the VEYLDF might add to their workload and work responsibilities and were concerned about how the Learning Outcomes would be assessed.

When these same early childhood professionals were interviewed a second time, their views in relation to the VEYLDF were more positive and much closer to those of the managers/principals. During the second site visit, the weaknesses seen in the VEYLDF related to its interpretation and how it could be improved.

It appeared that at this stage, early childhood professionals took for granted the value of the VEYLDF, and were more interested in the application of the VEYLDF. In tone, there was a movement from:

'Maybe we would be better off without this framework.'

to

'This framework is a good thing and we need to make it clearer so it can be used.'

'It's a big change. The language used is different as it's not in the developmental areas.'

'Trying to find time to read it, comprehend it and implement it. Some more vignettes would be good to provide real examples. I liked the way we could focus on one area at a time for this trial. Taking it stage to stage is a much easier approach.'

It appears that as they had become more familiar with the VEYLDF, they had a greater appreciation of the impact that the VEYLDF might have on children’s learning.

This shift in perspective may have important implications for implementation in 2010. Encouraging early childhood professionals to engage with parts of the VEYLDF over time may facilitate implementation and motivate them, while prescribing application of all elements at once may inhibit early childhood professionals from exploring creative ways to embed the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes into their work.

Interviews with Practitioner Advisory Group (PAG)

Twenty-one early childhood professionals from the PAG agreed to participate in the in-depth component of the trial. They responded to two surveys: one completed early in the trial, and one survey completed near

the end of the trial. Data were received from 18 of the 21 PAGS in the first survey and complete data were received from 17 of the 21 PAGs. This is a very high response rate to a survey, and is indicative of their commitment and their motivation to be involved.

Graph 6 presents the group data from the 18 PAG representatives who completed the first survey.

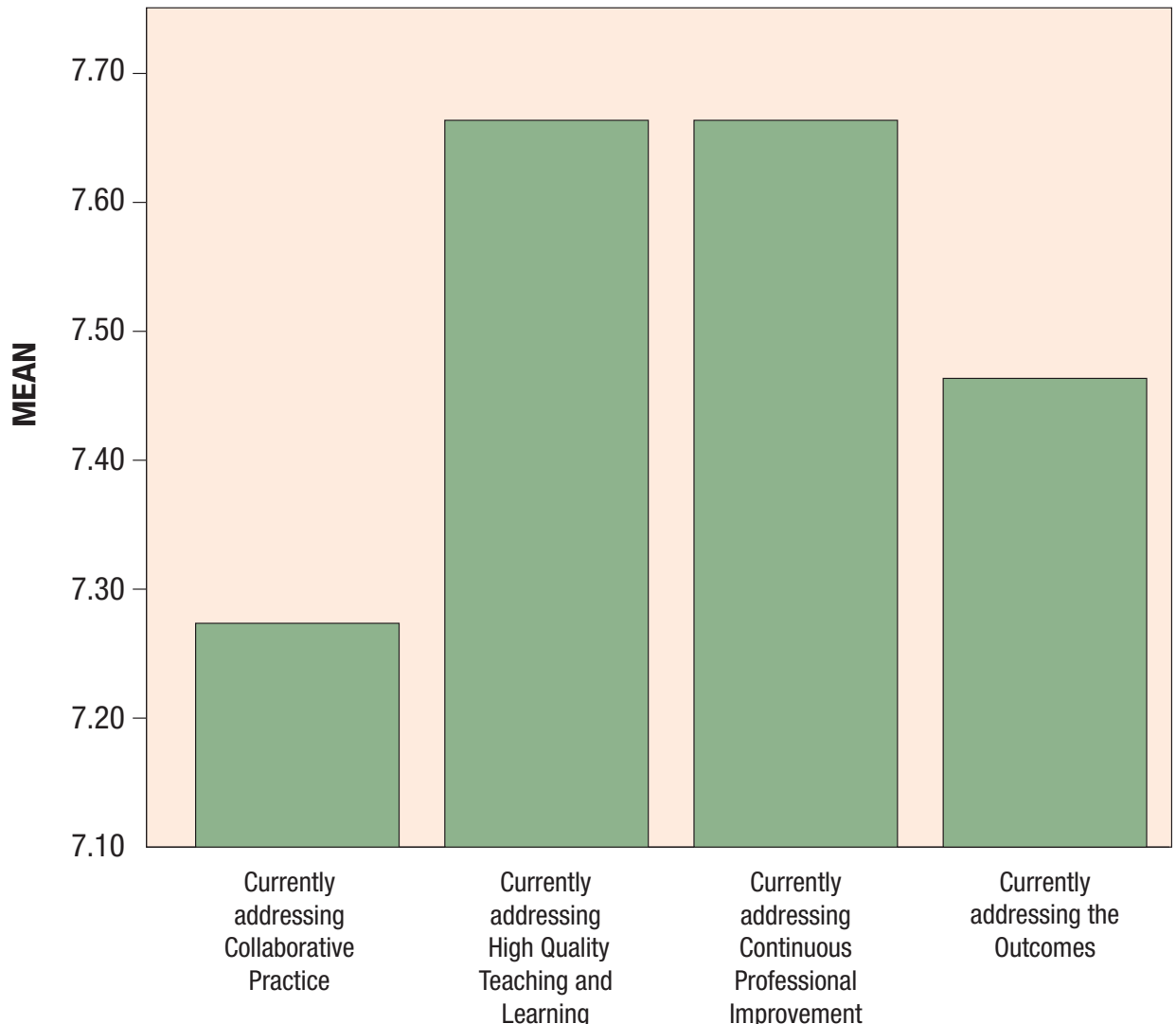
Similarly to the managers/principals and early childhood professionals from the interview trial sites, the PAG participants believed they were currently addressing Collaborative Practice least well.³ Graph 7 presents analysis of group data from the PAG participants following completion of the second survey.

Changes in perspectives

One major difference was noted among the PAG participants from completion of the first survey to the

³ PAG participants were not asked to rate the overall extent to which their service were addressing the principles of the VEYLDF, but were asked to rate the extent to which their services were addressing the individual principles.

Graph 6:
First PAG
Survey

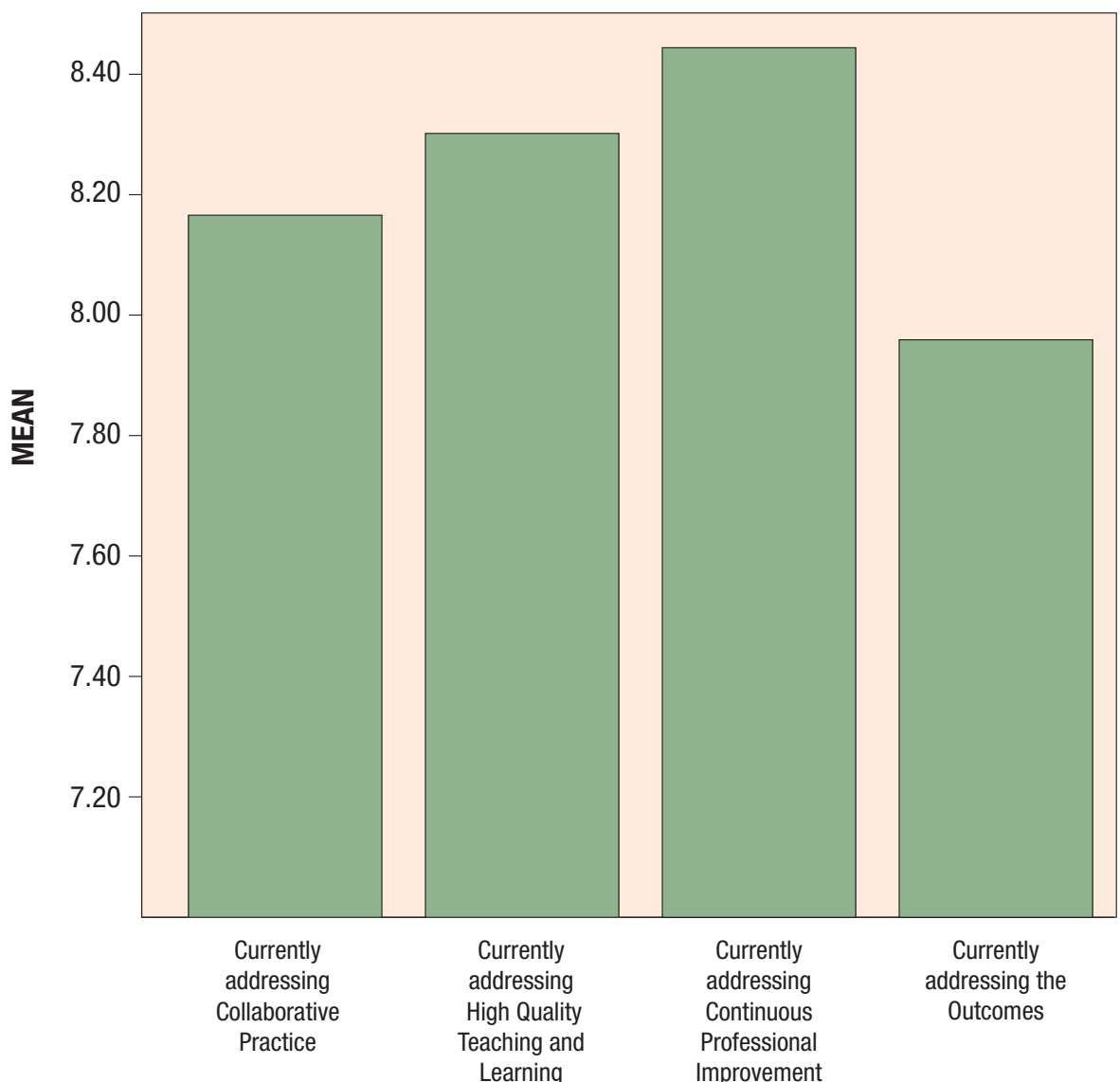


second survey. In the first survey, they were more cautious about the VEYLDF than in the second survey. While this occurred in the interview trial sites with early childhood professionals, the shift in attitude was more marked in the PAG group.

It may be that prior involvement in the trial and validation process of the EYLF had an impact on the PAG group allowing them to consider implications of the VEYLDF for their practice. In addition, members of the PAG shared examples of the ways they had modified their program and service delivery during the trial. Given the relatively short timeframe of the trial, this is an impressive indication of the potential of the VEYLDF to foster change.

Representatives of the PAG noted a number of changes they had initiated during the trial period. Key changes in practice stimulated by the trial can be clustered into the following five main areas (examples of specific changes in services are included in brackets):

1. improvement in reflective practice (e.g. professional reflective practice in service setting, individual and group reflections on the daily program)
2. establishment of linkages and networks with other early childhood professionals (e.g. linkages established between early childhood and school sector, development of new professional network in a regional area, implementation of an internal pedagogical reference group in a LDC)
3. incorporating the terminology of the VEYLDF into daily practice and in discussions with others (e.g. using terminology of the VEYLDF in discussions with parents/families, children's programs aligned with the Learning Outcomes, professional conversations with parents)
4. identification of creative ways to engage children's voices in programming (e.g. consultation with children on the meaning of learning and development)



Graph 7:
Second
PAG Survey

5. improvements in understanding the continuum of learning and development from birth to eight years (e.g. evidence of improvements in staff morale due to a common focus, inclusion of professional development sessions about the VEYLDF).

These changes indicate that the VEYLDF can foster reflection and action by early childhood professionals in a relatively short period of time given appropriate levels of encouragement and support.

The PAG participants were encouraged to find an entry point through which to engage with the VEYLDF, which may have supported motivation to trial new practice. This has implications for the value of a staged implementation phase that supports services to explore the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF in relation to existing practices and critically reflect on the approaches they adopt.

Section 4: Synthesis of data across groups

This section brings together the data from the interview trial sites and the PAG survey sites. It summarises all perspectives from managers/principals and early childhood professionals in relation to three aspects:

1. General views about the VEYLDF
2. Views on Learning Outcomes and Practice Principles
3. Support required for implementation

General views about the VEYLDF

One of the purposes of the trial was to document views of the VEYLDF from managers/principals and early childhood professionals who will be responsible for its implementation. While the contexts of practice between early years services and schools have important differences, most individuals in both settings were positive about the VEYLDF.

Early childhood professionals in the PAG survey sites and in interview trial sites indicated that the VEYLDF was consistent with their existing practice, but provided them with a language for communicating their work. They appeared optimistic that the VEYLDF would contribute to perceptions of the professionalism of their work with children. Similarly to managers, they believed the VEYLDF will improve consistency across services responsible for the education and care of young children.

In particular, principals and early childhood teachers valued the consistency of the VEYLDF with the VELS, but expressed less clarity about the implications of the VEYLDF to their work context.

Views on Learning and Development Outcomes and Practice Principles

Almost all participants indicated that the Learning Outcomes were appropriate with most giving the highest rating of 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 for importance of the Learning Outcomes (average rating 4.85). Most participants rated their service as performing well on the Learning Outcomes.

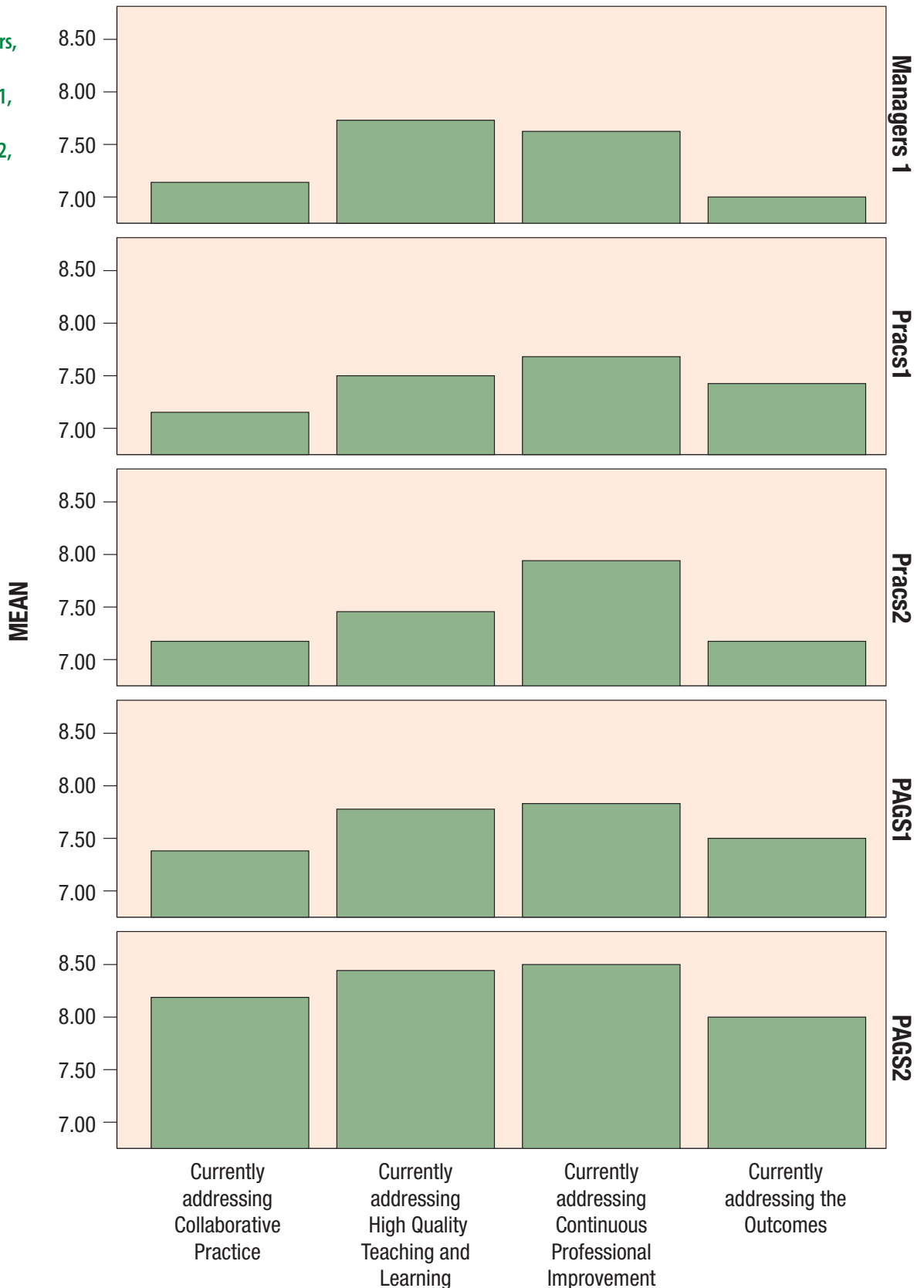
Managers noted that the Learning Outcomes are important to services and have the potential to support improved outcomes for children.

Graph 8 (below) illustrates the impressions of early childhood professionals from the interview trial sites and the 18 early childhood professionals from the PAG survey trial sites. The graphs depict each group’s perspective on how their services were currently addressing the Practice Principles at Visit 1 (early in the trial) and Visit 2 (later in the trial). The

data presented here therefore draws on four specific data collection components:

- interviewed early childhood professionals’ perspectives from the interview sites – collected at Visit 1 (first interview) and Visit 2 (second interview)

Graph 8:
Means for managers, early childhood professionals Visit 1, early childhood professionals Visit 2, PAGS1, and PAGS2



- 18 early childhood professionals from the PAG survey sites – collected at Visit 1 (first survey) and 17 collected at Visit 2 (second survey).

For purposes of illustration, these graphs were drawn only from a restricted section of the ten-point scale. The actual differences are therefore not as pronounced as would seem apparent in the tables.

There was consistency among the four sets of practitioner data. This consistency is a contributing indicator to the reliability of the data, revealing a high level of non-randomness among the results.

Graph 8 (below) illustrates findings from all practitioner and manager/principal datasets.

- It can be seen that Collaborative Practice was identified as being the most challenging principle for all groups to address. In all practitioner datasets, professional development was seen as being best addressed.
- There was a positive change in perspective in the PAG group from the first to the second survey in terms of how well the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes were being addressed. It appears that in the weeks between completion of the first and second survey, these early childhood professionals found ways to bring their services more into alignment with the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes. PAG early childhood professionals initiated a number of processes during the trial and noted the impact of their participation in the trial on their thinking and practice as noted in the previous section.
- Most managers/principals and early childhood professionals indicated that their services were already doing well in addressing the Practice Principles.
- While ratings were high, managers/principals and early childhood professionals believed their services did least well in addressing Collaborative Practice. All groups saw the area of Collaborative Practice as the VEYLDF Practice Principle that offered the greatest opportunity for improvement.
- Collaborative Practice within the VEYLDF has three components: family-centred practice, partnerships with other professionals, and responding to issues of equity and diversity. Most trial participants appeared to equate Collaborative Practice with their work related to family-centred practice in particular engaging with families, rather than collaboration with other agencies or services or responding to issues of equity and diversity.

- While they emphasised the impediments to family-centred practice as logistics, language, and culture, they contributed a range of strategies to improve Collaborative Practice.

Views about implementation of the VEYLDF

Managers/principals acknowledged opportunities for the VEYLDF to link into existing work and to other improvement initiatives. They expressed a view that the Practice Principles and the Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF have the potential to create a positive developmental and learning milieu for children from birth to eight years. They also indicated that change will be required in the way that early years learning and development is conceptualised and practiced.

However, they expressed concern about the:

- timelines for implementation
- difficulty of changing existing behaviours and/or culture of practice
- potential burden on staff in terms of time necessary to meet the requirements, including completing additional documentation.

This group acknowledged that resources will be required to support implementation. They raised additional questions about how early years services and schools will evaluate the success of the implementation of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes. An illustrative quote from a principal highlights concerns about the monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the VEYLDF:

'How do we measure the effectiveness of each service? What quality measurement will be used? As much as it is easy (and there is a need to) have ongoing conversations about where we are now, how do we find out what is happening in each setting? How do we gauge effective practice? What does it look like, and how can we share effective practice?'

Early childhood professionals who work with children under five years revealed a remarkable consistency with the views of managers regarding implementation needs. Both groups expressed approval with the fact that the language of the VEYLDF will better define the work they do, and will bring a better understanding of its professional nature. However, both groups were concerned about the potential burden of implementing the VEYLDF. All groups indicated that time and support will be necessary to facilitate implementation in 2010.

Early childhood professionals, especially, indicated the need to have specific direction in terms of what should be done to bring their services into line with the VEYLDF.

'I need help getting started – finding how it (VEYLDF) links to current programming and how to document in the program.'

'It takes time to get to know it and then work out how you can best use it to support your program.'

Early childhood professionals in school settings expressed concerns about the additional workload that implementation may require. They appeared to be less certain than other early childhood professionals about how the VEYLDF will influence their work.

Several noted the alignment of the VEYLDF with the VELS as a strength, but in a way this alignment or synergy leads them to question the implications of the VEYLDF to their practice. One primary school teacher commented:

'Where will the document fit into the primary school setting? What will we do with it? How will we implement it? Is it just to increase our awareness or should we act on it?'

A common theme among managers/principals and early childhood professionals was a call for professional development. Professional development in this context referred to training and support materials tailored to service needs and context. The main difference between managers and early childhood professionals was an emphasis on the need for more specific information in terms of what to do.

'In relation to families – how will we discuss the framework with families? Will there be a document for families? We need time to talk to families about the document.'

'I'm concerned about implementing this framework in a new way – not the way I have been trained or operating.'

'I'm not confident with the broad outcomes yet.'

Section 5: Findings from focus groups

This section presents the findings of the focus groups with a specific emphasis on implications for implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010.

Parents and families

Twenty-two parents participated in the focus group discussions – 21 female and one male; with participant ages ranging from 31 to 50 years of age. Most participants had more than one child, most of whom were under eight years of age but some children were teenagers.

Parents in focus groups highlighted the importance of communicating the VEYLDF appropriately with families, and expressed concern that some families may not be able to understand the material as currently presented. A summary of the major points raised by parents in the focus groups is included in Appendix 6.

Focus groups highlighted a number of implications to support implementation of the VEYLDF for families. These are listed below.

Support materials and promotional information for families about the VEYLDF need to be:

- **Clear and concise:** Language use needs to be simpler and the two Learning Outcomes of Identity and Community need to be explained more clearly for parents.
- **Presented in multiple formats:** (written, DVD, television, Internet) and multiple times.
- **Provide guidance:** Outline where to go for support and provide more guidance for parents of children with additional needs.
- **Practical and positive:** Focus on what parents can do.
- **Tailored to children's age group:** The language and examples used for the group of children from birth to age three needs to be different. These parents believed the language of the VEYLDF had a strong educational voice.

Playgroup and supported playgroups coordinators

Fifteen coordinators of playgroups and supported playgroups participated in the focus group interview.

They generated the following list of suggestions to support implementation of the VEYLDF:

- The importance of VCAA regularly meeting and connecting with supported playgroup coordinators in 2010 as this group are clearly an important platform in the continuum of a child's learning and development pathway.
- Playgroups and supported playgroups will need to be included in the VEYLDF as an early childhood service.
- 'Supporting children's learning and development in Victoria' needs to include reference to playgroups and supported playgroups as a platform to support families, the parents' role, ways to link to services and strategies for supporting parents.
- Practice Principles are critical as a support for parents in their role as the child's educator at home and link to parent's wellbeing.
- Acknowledgment needs to be made that the family environment or home learning environment may be the only environment families access prior to children's attendance at kindergarten/and or school.
- Relationships are the foundation for children's construction of identity, especially if the home environment is the only learning environment a child is accessing prior to attending kindergarten and/or school.
- There is a need for a companion guide for agencies who are supporting vulnerable families.

Maternal and child health (MCH) coordinators

Sixteen MCH coordinators shared their views on the VEYLDF and signalled the following implications to support the implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010:

- It will be important to align MCH and other early childhood professional practices.
- It was suggested more work be undertaken on identifying how MCH nurses shape their practices to meet family needs.
- Participants noted that the Learning Outcomes will provide guidance for MCH nurses working with families of children from birth to three years.
- Participants identified a number of existing

agencies and resources that may be drawn on to support implementation, including postcards that include reference to children's learning, literacy week in towns open to children of all ages, and the Early Learning is Fun (ELF) program.

- Some participants commented on the narrowness of some of the language used in the VEYLDF. Participants noted that the document should be more inclusive of the role of health professionals in learning and development.
- There will be ongoing liaison with MCH coordinators in 2010 to maintain and support implementation of the VEYLDF.
- MCH materials will be updated to reflect the Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF.

Cultural organisations

Eight representatives from a range of Victorian cultural organisations identified strategies they were undertaking to better engage children and families. Participants noted the most common connection with children and families was gained through libraries, but that there was a need to extend awareness of the role of cultural organisations in supporting children's learning and development.

A representative from the National Gallery noted they had supported programs for school age children and early years for over fifty years, but it appeared that the programming for children within these age groups had not been well coordinated. Representatives of organisations participating in the focus groups saw the VEYLDF as an opportunity to link program areas.

- The key agreement emerging from this focus group was that the role of early childhood education officers in museums, libraries, zoos, galleries and botanic gardens be included in the VEYLDF.
- Museum Victoria will convene a bi-monthly meeting to focus on early childhood learning and to identify opportunities for joint promotion. This group has agreed to meet with DEECD and VCAA from 2010 to identify ways to promote cultural organisations and settings as learning environments.
- Cultural organisations will be included in the redraft of the VEYLDF as early childhood professionals and listed in the relevant Appendix of the document.

Discussions with children

Thirty nine children participated in opportunities to share their perspectives of learning and development. This section provides an overview of key themes from the discussions. Additional detail of the findings of these consultations can be found in Appendix 5.

Overall, children spoke about learning in a social setting, where play and friendship were important features. Children identified their program interests with little prompting.

Children identified aspects of happiness that influence their wellbeing. These included: family and pets, friendships, playing and being seen as happy. In the kindergarten setting, this was extended to playing in the outdoor area, being social and having fun.

Younger children identified friends and activities as being the most important aspect in a transition process within a service. Older children going to school in 2010 listed major features of the school environment: friends, learning, reading and writing, homework and uniforms. This initial collection of perspectives will form the basis upon which further work will be based. It is envisaged that innovative methods and strategies can be developed to further support the incorporation of children's perspectives into VEYLDF implementation in 2010.

Section 6: Findings from online feedback

Opportunities were provided for practitioners/teachers, families, students, managers/principals and peak bodies and organisations to document their views of the VEYLDF.

The data received from online sources differed in nature from the data received from face-to-face interviews. Individuals who provided online feedback appeared to be more willing to be overt about their views. This was especially the case for practitioners who at times held strong views about their existing workload and concerns about how more work could be accommodated.

Written responses on the VEYLDF were also provided by Melton Shire Council, Kidsafe, Community Child Care, Kids – 'Go for your life' managed by Cancer Council Victoria and Diabetes Australia – Victoria. These responses have been included in the online analysis – peak bodies and organisations.

Early childhood professionals/teachers

Practitioners expressed concerns about the timelines for implementation of the VEYLDF and were concerned about the additional workload. It should be noted that some of these concerns were clearly emanating from the requirement to write Transition Statements by the end of November 2009.

The Practice Principles were considered to be supportive of current practices and were flexible enough to allow for different educational philosophies, curriculum and teaching styles.

There was strong support for the Learning Outcomes and the continuum of learning they provide across birth to eight years. Many of the early childhood professionals and teachers who submitted online responses indicated that the Learning Outcomes provided possibilities for valuable links to develop between early years services and schools and that the VEYLDF had the potential to raise the professional status of early childhood professionals.

Early childhood professionals identified the need for support to incorporate the Learning Outcomes into planning and evaluation.

'Some planning templates and samples of how to incorporate effective planning/evaluations reflecting the VEYLDF. More practical examples of program design and experiences to promote learning in specific areas.'

Views were expressed that families would also need support in interpreting the Learning Outcomes. However, it was noted that the VEYLDF provides language which could easily be used by professionals in discussion with families.

Early childhood professionals noted that children from CALD backgrounds and children with additional needs were well represented in the VEYLDF; however, there was recognition of the need for funding, training, and support for implementation, especially for children with additional needs.

Managers/principals

This group was pleased to see that the VEYLDF clearly recognises that children's learning occurs in the years before school and continues beyond and around school, and includes the role of the family in children's learning. As with early childhood professionals and teachers, this group identified the versatility of the language used in the VEYLDF as a strength in communicating with other professionals and with families.

There was an observation that the VEYLDF assumes that all children will access some sort of early years service and that those who may not are in some way 'failing' in the Learning Outcomes.

Managers/principals providing online feedback indicated that early childhood professionals will be supported and united through the VEYLDF and that it will support more effective linkages with schools and families.

A clear message about the importance of support for implementation, through funding, professional development and time was evident.

Consideration needs to be given to supporting access by less literate families to the messages incorporated in the VEYLDF.

Families

Four parents/families completed the family survey to provide feedback on the VEYLDF. One participant provided a point of view from both personal and professional perspectives, stating that the VEYLDF was difficult to read as a professional and expressed the concern that many parents would also find it difficult to read. This participant also stated that there was a need to produce material that is accessible to the average parent and those with low literacy. This picks up on observations made by participants in the parent focus groups and comments made by early childhood professionals in trial sites.

Another participant felt there should be a greater emphasis in the Learning Outcomes about a child's

ability to form friendships and the development of social skills.

One participant felt the VEYLDF did not allow for the Montessori philosophy.

'My child attends a Montessori program, and your rating does not support their outstanding educational approach.'

This view clearly contrasts with statements made by early childhood professionals that the VEYLDF has the flexibility to incorporate a range of perspectives and philosophies.

Students

Graduate students who provided feedback were generally positive about the VEYLDF. Many felt it reflects contemporary practice (especially the Practice Principles), encourages a holistic approach and emphasises partnerships, communication and collaboration with families.

It was noted that the VEYLDF aligns well with both the EYLF and the VELs. This group also noted the flexibility of the VEYLDF in that it is adaptable to different philosophies and approaches. There were conflicting views on the inclusion of Indigenous children and children with additional needs.

Peak bodies/organisations

The comments from this group were generally not as closely aligned to comments from the other groups. For example, the VEYLDF was seen as succinct and concise by most groups, but a number of comments from academics who provided online comments indicated the VEYLDF should be expanded. Most other groups did not share this view that the VEYLDF should be bigger.

This group was generally positive about the VEYLDF, although some comments indicated a feeling that it had been 'diluted', was 'too bland', and that it did not attend appropriately to cultural diversity. The comments from this group appeared to relate to issues of philosophy more than the VEYLDF's relevance to everyday practice.

Representatives of peak bodies and organisations welcomed the representation of continuity in learning and teaching and supported the holistic approach to the child. They noted that there was evidence of strong links between children's health and education as critical to their longer term wellbeing. The VEYLDF also provides a basis for the development of early childhood programs and communication with parents. *'It supports a common language across early years settings and with parents and families and gives*

clarity to parents regarding education’ (particular reference to the value of including the VELLS table in the document).

Most recognised the provision of resources, training and professional development for early childhood professionals as essential to meeting the objectives of the VEYLDF. Consideration needs to be given to the diversity of qualifications in early years services when providing professional development and support.

‘Also, given the diversity of qualification levels in the EC sector, for some the VEYLDF content may be counter to their practice and for others it maybe nothing new. Training/media must be engaging and diverse to meet the needs of the sector.’

Section 7: Implications for implementation

In this section a summary of the major findings is presented along with considerations for the implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010.

Broad support for the VEYLDF

- The content of the VEYLDF is well regarded by all stakeholder groups.
- The Learning Outcomes and Practice Principles included in the VEYLDF were seen to be highly relevant to the work of early childhood professionals and relevant for families who are acknowledged as the child’s first and most important educators.
- The three core Practice Principles outlined in the VEYLDF were consistent with existing philosophies and practices of most services and schools that participated in the trial. This is a positive finding for implementation as all early childhood professionals can use the VEYLDF to build on existing philosophies and practices without having to radically change underpinning concepts or practice guidelines.
- The Learning Outcomes were seen to be relevant and inclusive of all children as they support a continuum of learning and development and include opportunities for informal and formal learning.
- The language used in the VEYLDF was generally regarded as appropriate, but will need to be adapted to address the range of groups it encompasses.
- Early childhood professionals contrasted the VEYLDF with the EYLF that focuses on learning from birth to five years. The messages contained in both documents were seen to be consistent. A strong theme emerged about the value of the VEYLDF in extending Learning Outcomes from birth to eight years. Early childhood professionals indicated that the VEYLDF will improve continuity between families, early years services, and schools.
- Early childhood professionals working in family day care, long day care, kindergartens, and out of school hours care viewed the VEYLDF as positively contributing to the professional profile of their work. They believed the VEYLDF will

improve the respect of the community towards early childhood professionals. They indicated that the VEYLDF will strengthen their role in working with children and foster improvements in communicating and collaborating with families, other early childhood professionals, schools and the wider community.

- The consistency of the VEYLDF with the VELS was highlighted as a strength by primary school principals and early childhood professionals in school settings because it promoted better continuity of learning between birth to five year olds and school age children. However, early childhood professionals in school settings appeared to be less certain about the way the VEYLDF will influence their teaching and learning practices and identified a need for clarity about expectations.

An opportunity for positive change

- Managers/principals rated their current practice as relatively high on both Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes, indicating the VEYLDF is consistent with current philosophies and practice.
- Managers/principals and early childhood professionals agreed that their services did less well in addressing Collaborative Practice than in addressing the other two Practice Principles. This was seen as an area where improvements can be made.
- Evidence of shifts in perceptions during the trial in both PAG survey sites and interview trial sites with early childhood professionals indicates that familiarity with the VEYLDF may facilitate increased motivation and commitment to change.
- The common language of the VEYLDF will promote more effective communication across services and with families.
- The VEYLDF supports the importance of all early childhood professionals who work with children across the learning and development spectrum from birth to eight years. Early childhood professionals in all contexts will gain a clearer voice with the common language of the VEYLDF and a higher level of recognition for their work.
- The extension of the VEYLDF from birth to eight years will support communication about transitions from early years services to school in a uniform format.

Concern about the burden of implementation

- There was considerable concern expressed about the additional workload that the implementation of the VEYLDF may entail.
- Online feedback about the VEYLDF received from managers, key stakeholder groups, tertiary students, early childhood professionals and parents revealed a more critical assessment of the VEYLDF about the potential burden of implementation.
- Trial participants working in early years services expressed strong concern about the impact of the implementation phase of the VEYLDF on them.
- While there was broad acceptance that the VEYLDF will be implemented officially in 2010, early childhood professionals expressed concern that the VEYLDF represented another layer of expectations on what they believed was an already untenable workload.
- Teachers and principals noted the burden of implementation in relation to other initiatives and accountability requirements introduced in the past year (e.g. AEDI, E5 instructional model, English on Line, transition statements).

Support required for implementation

Suggestions to support implementation of the VEYLDF are presented below. They are grouped into three main categories: staged implementation, provision of resources and professional development, and regional service networks.

1. Staged implementation

- It will be important to stage implementation to support early childhood professionals' work and commitment to the VEYLDF. Given the importance of building a culture of reflective practice, staged implementation will allow progressive feedback on implementation successes and challenges. Consultation and feedback on the process of implementation will identify emergent needs from differing service types and resources required to support early childhood professionals with differing experience, skill sets, and knowledge.

2. Provision of resources and professional development

- Tailored support Materials: Tailored support materials will need to be provided for groups working with children under three years old,

children from three to five years old and children from five to eight years. For those working with children aged under three, specific resources will be required that support integration of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes into existing planning.

- Resources specific to diverse needs: Resources will need to be developed that are appropriate for the diverse range of early childhood professionals working with children, particularly for those working with children in FDC, LDC, and OSHC settings. Practical resources that support reflective practice and application will be required.
- Materials to support application of VEYLDF: The VEYLDF acknowledges the importance of embedding the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes into all elements of practice. Resources will need to be developed to support integration of the VEYLDF into all elements of programming and planning for all children under eight years of age. Specific attention should be focused on the implementation of the VEYLDF beyond prep to Years 1 and 2 for those working with children who are five to eight year olds.
- Professional Development: Professional development and opportunities for mentorship and coaching will be valuable in assisting

early childhood professionals in integrating the VEYLDF into their practice. Professional development should foster professional conversations and assist them in introducing concepts within the VEYLDF to families.

3. Regional Learning Networks and Service Linkages
 - The development of regional learning networks may support implementation of the VEYLDF. Learning networks may incorporate small groups of early childhood professionals from across service types to support active reflection and transformation of practice. It is envisaged that the development of learning networks will bring together early childhood professionals and strengthen:
 - identification of the role of the VEYLDF in progressing Learning Outcomes for children from birth to eight years
 - practical strategies to support implementation in practice
 - ways to improve practice by encouraging working across traditional service and practice boundaries
 - methods to improve communication and collaboration
 - feedback mechanisms on progress and learnings from implementation.

Section 8: Summary and conclusion

The VEYLDF is well accepted and appreciated. While this acceptance and appreciation does not extend to all managers/principals and early childhood professionals, it is broadly based. There is a general agreement that if the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes can be met, there will be an improvement in the learning and development of children in the early childhood years.

It is clear that much work has been done in preparing and negotiating the VEYLDF into its current form. The data from this report indicates that this work has been appropriate and is appreciated by managers/principals and early childhood professionals involved in the trial.

The VEYLDF is seen as a document that may improve understanding of the importance of the early childhood workforce, and the consistency of services across the state. It is appreciated for focusing on the whole child. It is seen as a positive step forward by most managers/principals and early childhood professionals.

The implementation of the VEYLDF is seen as important, and it is clear that all stakeholders do not see its implementation as something that will necessarily be easy or quick. While they believe that generally their services already align with the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the VEYLDF, the changes that are necessary to bring their services into further alignment are viewed as requiring time, professional development, and continued support.

Managers/principals and early childhood professional groups reported that they were concerned about the potential burden of the VEYLDF on the work time they have available. It is clear that the implementation of the VEYLDF should be understood within the context of other expectations of the early childhood reform agenda.

This trial shed light on how this implementation may better proceed. It appears that an iterative discussion of the VEYLDF during this trial fostered an appreciation among those who are integral to its implementation. This increased appreciation of the VEYLDF manifested during the trial has important implications.

As early childhood professionals across Victoria become more familiar with the VEYLDF, they will likely become more positive in relation to how it can help the learning and development of young children.

This indicates that a phased approach to implementation will provide an improved integration of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes within their practice. Expecting rapid changes too soon will not bode well for acceptance of the VEYLDF, or for supporting better outcomes for children. It is suggested that a phased approach be adopted, allowing services to audit their current practice and to identify specific focal areas. This phased approach will allow early years sites to become more familiar with the VEYLDF during the implementation process. Trial sites were encouraged to establish an entry point to engage with the VEYLDF and reflect on their practice, but not to attempt to grasp the VEYLDF in its entirety over the trial period. This trial has demonstrated that acceptance and appreciation follows exposure to the VEYLDF.

This trial also gave light to a further consideration that may assist in improving support for the VEYLDF. There was a clear expression in this trial from the early childhood professionals that their work is not highly understood by others, and in the past has not been well articulated. A number of early childhood professionals expressed the hope that the VEYLDF will better articulate what they do so that others better understand the value of the early childhood workforce. If this is the case, dissemination of key messages to early childhood professionals, families and the community could highlight this feature of the VEYLDF in a manner that may increase approval and support for the VEYLDF. If the VEYLDF is presented to early childhood professionals as a way to better define and articulate the meaningful work they do, it is likely the early childhood professionals will have a higher level of commitment to its implementation.

The trial also provided additional information relating to implementation. The trial confirmed that early years services are varied and any implementation plan needs to recognise that one format of support or resources will not fulfill this varied range of needs. There is a need to customise support to address specific needs.

The VEYLDF has already fostered a change in practice among services that have been involved in this trial. It articulates a vision of practice that provides a common language to those who work with children from birth to eight years and it provides a possibility for improved learning, development and transitions. The first steps in creating this vision have been well considered and have proven to be appreciated by those participating in this trial. It is important that the next steps of bringing vision to practice are also well considered and managed.

Glossary and acronyms

AEDI – Australian Early Development Index

CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Cultural organisations – public organisations such as libraries, museums, zoos, galleries and botanic gardens

DEECD – Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

EC – Early Childhood

ECIS – Early Childhood Intervention Service

EYLF – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (National Framework)

EYS – Early Years Services: within this report the term ‘*services*’ is inclusive of early childhood services and primary schools

E5 – An instructional model to facilitate high quality instruction

FDC – Family day care

LGA – Local Government Authority

LDC – Long day care

MCH – Maternal and child health

OSHC – Outside school hours care

PAG – Practitioner advisory group

VCAA – Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

VELS – Victorian Essential Learning Standards

VEYLDF – Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for Children from Birth to Eight Years: A draft for trial and validation, August to October 2009 (Victorian Framework)

Appendix 1

Interview trial sites

Name of service	Type of service	Service address	Postcode
Black Hill Primary School	Government school	601 Chisholm Street Ballarat	3350
Community Early Years Childcare Yackandandah	Innovative mobile rural service: long day care	62 Twist Creek Road Yackandandah	3749
Community Early Years Childcare Chiltern	Funded kindergarten program	55–57 Main Street Chiltern	3689
Mallee Track Health and Community Service: Mallee Minors Childcare Centre	Innovative mobile rural service: long day care	Hughes Street Ouyen	3490
Wangaratta Children’s Services Centre	Integrated children’s service: long day care	1 Handley Street Wangaratta	3677
Brotherhood of St Laurence: Family Day Care	Family day care	120 Hothlyn Drive Craigieburn	3064
Burwood Heights Primary School	Government school	Cnr Hawthorn and Mahoney Road, Burwood East	3151
Warracknabeal Kindergarten	Cluster managed: funded kindergarten program	Anzac Park Warracknabeal	3393
Swan Hill Rural City Council: Out of School Hours Care	Out of school hours care	Swan Hill Primary School Gray Street Swan Hill	3585
Yarrunga Primary School	Government school	38–50 White Street Wangaratta	3677
La Trobe City: Family Day Care	Family day care	141 Commercial Road Morwell	3840
Bethal Primary School	Government school	26 Eldorado Crescent Meadow Heights	3048
Mornington Peninsula Shire: Family Day Care	Family day care	21 Marine Parade Hastings	3195
Fyans Park Primary School	Government school	37 Cook Street Newtown	3220
Valkstone Primary School: Out of School Hours Care	Out of school hours care	Valkstone Primary School 44 Valkstone Street Bentleigh East	3165
First Steps Child Care Centre	Privately owned: long day care	1 Regent Street Whittington	3219

Wedge Park Primary School	Government school	Cambrian Way Melton	3337
Wheelers Hill Primary School: Out of School Hours Care	Out of school hours care	Wheelers Hill Primary School 138–148 Whites Lane Wheelers Hill	3150
Yappera Children's Service Cooperative	Aboriginal long day care service	213 Watt Street Thornbury	3071
Cowes Primary School	Government school	159–203 Settlement Road Cowes	3922
Yooralla/ Altona North Early Childhood Service	Integrated children's service: Early Childhood Intervention Service/ funded kindergarten program	30 Ronald Avenue Altona North	3025
Gunai Lidj Child Care Centre	Aboriginal long day care and occasional care	Buckley Street Morwell	3840
Colac Special Development School	Special school	120a Wilson Street Colac	3250

Practitioner advisory group

Name of service	Type of service	Service address	Postcode
St Thomas More's Primary School	Catholic school	Reynold's Lane Belgrave	3160
Monash University (Caulfield) Child Care Centre	Long day care	22–24 Derby Road Caulfield East	3145
Gowrie Victoria	Long day care	Cnr Newry and Canning Street Carlton North	3054
St Gregory the Great Primary School	Catholic school	396 Manningham Road Doncaster	3108
Homestead Child and Family Centre – Roxburgh Park	Integrated children's centre	15 Homestead Run Roxburgh Park	3064
Kindergarten Union Children's Service: Emerald Hill	Long day care centre	219 Dorcas Street South Melbourne	3205
Kindergarten Union Children's Service: The Joey Club	Long day care centre	450 Melrose Drive Melbourne Airport	3043
Kindergarten Union Children's Service: Alfred Child Care Centre	Long day care centre	11 Alfred Lane Melbourne	3004
Knox Gardens Preschool	Cluster managed: funded kindergarten program	81 Argyle Way Wantirna South	3152
University of Melbourne Early Learning Centre	Early learning centre	40 Clarke Street Abbottsford	3067
Audrey Brooks Memorial Preschool	Funded kindergarten program	347 Bell Street West Heidelberg	3081

Tree House Child Care	Privately owned: long day care	45 Brighton Road St Kilda	3182
Biala Peninsula	Early Intervention Service	PO Box 172 Mornington	3931
Bentons Square Occasional and Preschool Service	Occasional care and funded kindergarten program	Bentons Road Mornington	3931
Pakenham Consolidated School	Government school	2 Rundle Way Pakenham	3810
Echuca West Primary School	Government school	189 School Road Echuca	3564
Grace Park Preschool	Funded kindergarten program	179 Nepean Street Greensborough	3087
Hallam Gardens Kindergarten	Funded kindergarten program	26 Nettle Drive Hallam	3802
Barmah Kindergarten	Occasional care and funded kindergarten program	Schier Street Barmah	3639
Wesley Early Learning Centre	Independent school	St Kilda Road Campus 349 High Street Prahran	3181
Lady Huntingfield Children's Centre	Long day care	87–93 Haines Street North Melbourne	3051

Support person – Interview trial sites

Name of Support	Sites	Region
Michelle Ortlipp, PhD Early Childhood Lecturer	Black Hill Primary School, Ballarat	Grampians Region
	Yooralla/Altona North Early Childhood Service	Western Metropolitan Region
Angela Morcos Early Childhood Consultant	Brotherhood of St Laurence Family Day Care, Craigieburn	Northern Metropolitan Region
	La Trobe City Family Day Care, Morwell	Gippsland Region
Helen Newton Education Consultant	Burwood Heights Primary School	Eastern Metropolitan Region
	Wedge Park Primary School, Melton	Western Metropolitan Region
Eve Salter Early Childhood Consultant	Swan Hill Out of School Hours Care	Loddon Mallee Region
Heather Barnes Early Childhood Consultant	Wheelers Hill Out of School Hours Care	Eastern Metropolitan Region
Karen Anderson Kindergarten Teacher Balnarring	Mornington Peninsula Family Day Care	Southern Metropolitan Region
	First Steps Long Day Care, Whittington	Barwon South Western Region

Joy Gibson Early Childhood Consultant	Yappera Children's Service Cooperative, Thornbury	Northern Metropolitan Region
	Knox Gardens Kindergarten, Wantirna South	Eastern Metropolitan Region
Joanne Bruce Children's Services Adviser	Community Early Years Child Care Centre: Yackandandah Child Care	Hume Region
	Community Early Years Child Care Centre: Chiltern Kindergarten	Hume Region
Sue Crook Children's Services Adviser	Wangaratta Children's Services Centre: Long Day Care	Hume Region
Evon Grinham Children's Services Adviser	Warracknabeal Kindergarten	Grampians Region
Jan Jensen Children's Services Adviser	Gunai Lidgee Child Care Centre, Morwell	Gippsland Region

Support person – VCAA

Name of support	Sites
Carmel Phillips	Wesley College – Early Learning Centre, Prahran Community Early Years Child Care Centre: Yackandandah Child Care Community Early Years Child Care Centre: Chiltern Kindergarten
Colleen Watsford	Mallee Minors Child Care Centre, Ouyen
Maggie Bishop	Valkstone Primary School Out of School Hours Care, Bentleigh East Coves Primary School
Meron Drummond	Yarrunga Primary School, Wangaratta Bethal Primary School, Meadow Heights Fyans Primary School, Newtown Colac Special Development School

Appendix 2

Guidelines for support staff undertaking early years trial site visits

Before going to the site – initial telephone conversation

1. Contact the manager/principal of the service/school by phone. Although the manager/ principal will already have agreed to participate in the trial, it is a good idea to reiterate the purpose of the trial and outline your background and experience as an early years practitioner (to build initial rapport). It may be useful to emphasise the opportunity the site visits present to influence and inform the final drafting of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).
2. Confirm the need for two site visits. Explain that on the first visit, you will need to conduct a one hour interview with the manager/principal and a one hour interview with the nominated early years practitioner. The interviews will be conducted separately. This may also be the time to suggest that you will email the Service Details template (Template 1) to the manager/principal to be completed prior to your visit. The Service Details template collects background information about the centre/school, including its early years focus and demographic information.
3. Explain that there will be a second interview with the practitioner in September/October. Indicate that backfill will be provided for the interviews with the early years practitioner to allow them to participate in interviews on the first and second visit.
4. Arrange a suitable date for the initial site visit, and agree on an interview time with the manager/principal and the early years practitioner for this first visit. Confirm the arranged time and venue for the interview with the manager and the practitioner.

Initial site visit: process

The aim of the interview is to capture the key points, including some direct quotes from the person being interviewed. Consistent use of the interview templates provided will assist the evaluators in analysing the data and support the credibility and quality of the process.

On the visit, ensure you take:

- information kits for practitioners,
- a copy of the interview templates (2 and 3)
- laminated cards of the Practice Principles and Early Years Outcomes.

Steps for the support person:

1. Make contact with the manager/principal of the centre/school on your arrival
2. Briefly re-explain the purpose of the early years trial visits, the trial process and the fact that you will make two site visits.
3. Enquire if the manager/principal has completed the Service Details (Template 1: page 40) or if he/she will forward it to you or if you will collect it on your second visit.
4. This first interview with the manager/principal aims to gain an understanding of his/her perspective about the core elements of the Victorian Framework. Use Template 2: pages 41–44.
5. The second interview on this visit will be held with the nominated early years practitioner Use Template 3: pages 45–48 for this interview. The interviews will be conducted separately.
6. A second interview with the early years practitioner will be a follow-up interview, and this interview needs to be scheduled for September/October. The purpose of the second interview is to explore practice perspectives on the Victorian Framework and the implications of the Victorian Framework for their practice in more detail. (*Note:* Template 4 for this visit will be provided to assist you in gathering the information.)
7. If time permits and permission is granted, take a picture of the centre and make some observational notes (set up, play environment).
8. Write a case summary of the interview as soon as possible of about half a page. *What were your impressions and reflections of the service, of the programs offered and of the interviewees' perspectives?*
9. Email the notes collected during the interview to each person who was interviewed so that they can verify the contents.
10. Send the verified report to: watsford.colleen.f@edumail.vic.gov.au
11. The information from all interviews will be synthesised and analysed by the external evaluators to inform the final report.

Template 1

Service details proforma

(To be completed and returned to the Support Person by the manager/principal with any other appropriate documentation)

Name of support person: _____ Date _____

Name of service/school: _____

Service manager/principal: _____

Address of service: _____

Private or community: _____

Governance/management: (Board or Committee) _____

What is the main philosophy that underpins the way the service/school operates?

(Please attach any relevant documentation about your service/school, e.g. flyers, advertisements, promotional material)

Number of staff including manager/principal: _____

Nature of the community in which centre/school is located (major characterising features in terms of demographics, SES, ethnicity, characteristics):

Total number of children in the service/school: _____

Ages of children in the service/school: _____

Group sizes (# children per session/class) _____

Hours of operation: _____

Template 2

Manager/principal proforma template for early years site visits Interview with the manager/principal of the service/school

Explaining the purpose of the site visits: Suggested script to frame the conversation

In 2010, all early years services and schools that work with children from birth to eight years old will be required to implement the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (Victorian Framework).

The Victorian Framework complements the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (National Framework) released in July 2009. While the National Framework focuses on children from birth to five years, the Victorian Framework extends concepts and support for everyone who works with children from birth to eight years. The Victorian Framework will be launched in November 2009 and implementation begins in January 2010.

These early years trial site visits are part of a state-wide trial and validation process of the draft Victorian Framework. Information from these site visits and from the wider state-wide validation processes will be used to:

- *inform the redrafting of the final Victorian Framework*
- *identify support needs for implementation of the Victorian Framework*
- *establish existing practices that can be built on.*

Our purpose is to gain information from you that will do two things:

- 1.** *We want to find out about your service/school and how you work.*
- 2.** *We want to gain information that will help us to support services and schools to implement the Victorian Framework as clearly as possible.*

So let's get started. I will be taking extensive notes as you talk so that I can capture your views accurately. The questions aim to capture your views about what is needed to make the Victorian Framework as easy as possible to implement.

Following the interview, I will write a summary report based on our interview and send it to you to check for its accuracy before I submit it.

The report resulting from these consultations will draw on the comments and background information you share with me. Demographic and general impressions you share will be identifiable, as they will be included in a service template as an appendix to the final report.

However, if there are specific comments you make that you would not like identified with you or your service/school, please indicate to me and these will be reported without identification. I hope this will help you to be open in sharing your views.

A. Current practice

1. What are the current learning and development objectives for children at your service/school?

B. Major areas of the early childhood professional's work (Practice Principles in the Victorian Framework)

These principles are the foundations of professional practice for early childhood professionals working with children from birth to eight years in Victoria. The six principles reflect three major areas of the early childhood professional's work.

We want to get feedback on how you see these areas in relation to the service you provide. We will ask you about each area separately. (Interviewer hands 'Practice Principles' laminated card to the manager/principal.)

Collaborative practice

(Incorporating the principles of *Family Centred Practice, Partnerships, and Equity and Diversity*)

2. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

3. What does your service do to encourage collaborative practice?
4. What makes it challenging for your service to promote collaborative practice?
5. What support would you need to improve collaborative practice at your service/school?

High quality teaching and learning

(Incorporating the principles of *Responsive Engagement with Children and An Holistic Approach to Learning and Development*)

6. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

7. What does your service do to encourage high quality teaching and learning?
8. What makes it challenging to effectively deliver high quality teaching and learning?
9. What support would you need to better deliver high quality teaching and learning?

Continuous professional improvement

(Incorporating the principle of *Reflective Practice*)

10. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

11. What does your service do to encourage continuous professional improvement?
12. What makes it challenging to encourage continuous professional improvement in your service?
13. What support would you need to enhance continuous professional improvement in your service/school?

Synthesis Questions:

14. Looking at the three areas we just discussed, what do you think will be the implications for your service/school in implementing these Practice Principles?
15. In which areas will your service/school need most help?

C. Outcomes

There are five outcomes described in the Victorian Framework. These outcomes are consistent with the National Framework. As the Victorian Framework extends the outcomes from birth to eight years, we want to gain your feedback on these outcomes in terms of the service you provide in your community. Below is a list of the outcomes. (Interviewer to hand out card with outcomes listed on them to manager/principal.)

Outcomes	
Identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
Community	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning	Children are confident and involved learners
Communication	Children are effective communicators

The following questions aim to gain a picture of your service in relation to the outcomes.

16. How important are the outcomes to your service?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

17. What will your service do to apply these outcomes?
18. What challenges do you anticipate in applying these outcomes to your work with children?
19. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these outcomes in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

20. What could be done at your service/school to better attend to these outcomes?
21. How would you know if these outcomes are being addressed by your service/school?

Now I would like you to consider the way your service/school works with families in your community.

22. Can you briefly describe what you currently do to develop partnerships with parents and families?
23. How do you anticipate the Victorian Framework will influence the way you support children and families to make the transition between early years services and into school?
24. What are the implications of the Victorian Framework for integration of your service/school with other early years professionals?

D. General comments

- 25.** Overall, what do you think of the Victorian Framework?
- 26.** What do you see as its major strengths?
- 27.** What do you see as its major weaknesses?
- 28.** How relevant is it to the work of your service/school and the community you serve?
- 29. Overall at this point in time, at what level do you feel your service/school is addressing the Practice Principles of the Victorian Framework?** (*Remind manager to refer to the laminated Practice Principles card.*)
- In part** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**
- 30. Overall, at this point in time, at what level do you feel your service/school is addressing the Early Years Outcomes of the Victorian Framework?** (*Remind manager to refer to laminated Outcomes card.*)
- In part** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**
- 31.** In thinking through all the comments you have shared today, what are the key areas of the Victorian Framework that your service/school will need support to implement the Victorian Framework in 2010?

Thank you for your time. The next step for me is to prepare a summary of our discussion and send it back to you for checking and approval.

The information will then be analysed with information from other early years sites involved in the trial. This information will be used to re-draft the Victorian Framework, and identify areas where we will need to provide further support.

Template 3

Proforma template for early years site visits Interview with the practitioner (nominated by the manager/principal at the service/school)

Explaining the purpose of the site visits: Suggested script to frame the conversation

In 2010, all early years services and schools that work with children from birth to eight years old will be required to implement the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (Victorian Framework).

The Victorian Framework complements the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (National Framework) released in July 2009. While the National Framework focuses on children from birth to five years, the Victorian Framework extends concepts and support for everyone who works with children from birth to eight years. The Victorian Framework will be launched in November 2009 and implementation begins in January 2010.

These early years trial site visits are part of a state-wide trial and validation process of the draft Victorian Framework. Information from these site visits and from the wider state-wide validation processes will be used to:

- *inform the redrafting of the final Victorian Framework*
- *identify support needs for implementation of the Victorian Framework*
- *establish existing practices that can be built on.*

*Our purpose is to gain information from you that will do two things:
We want to find out about your service/school and how you work.*

We want to gain information that will help us to support services and schools to implement the Victorian Framework as clearly as possible.

So let's get started. I will be taking extensive notes as you talk so that I can capture your views accurately. The questions aim to capture your perception about what is needed to make the Victorian Framework as easy as possible to implement.

Following the interview, I will write a summary report based on our interview and send it to you to check for its accuracy. I will also be returning later in the trial to interview you again about the implications of the Victorian Framework for your practice.

The report resulting from these consultations will draw on the comments and background information you share with me. Demographic and general impressions you share will be identifiable, as they will be included in a service template as an appendix to the final report. However, if there are specific comments you make that you would not like identified with you or your service/school, please indicate to me and these will be reported without identification. I hope this will help you to be open in sharing your views.

Practitioner name: _____ **Support person** _____

Practitioner profile: What is the age group of the children with whom you **predominantly** work? (Circle one)

Under three year olds

three to five year olds

five to eight year olds
(School setting)

A. Current practice

1. What are the current learning and development objectives for children at your service/school?

B. Major areas of the early childhood professional's work (Practice Principles in the Victorian Framework)

These principles are the foundations of professional practice for early childhood professionals working with children from birth to eight years in Victoria. The six principles reflect three major areas of the early childhood professional's work.

We want to get feedback on how you see these areas in relation to the service you provide. We will ask you about each area separately. (Interviewer hands 'Practice Principles' laminated card to the practitioner).

Collaborative practice

(Incorporating the principles of *Family Centred Practice, Partnerships, and Equity and Diversity*)

2. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

3. What does your service do to encourage collaborative practice?
4. What makes it challenging for your service to promote collaborative practice?
5. What support would you need to improve collaborative practice at your service/school?

High quality teaching and learning

(Incorporating the principles of *Responsive Engagement with Children and An Holistic Approach to Learning and Development*)

6. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

7. What does your service do to encourage high quality teaching and learning?
8. What makes it challenging to effectively deliver high quality teaching and learning?
9. What support would you need to better deliver high quality teaching and learning?

Continuous professional improvement (Incorporating the principle of *Reflective Practice*)

10. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

11. What does your service do to encourage continuous professional improvement?
12. What makes it challenging to encourage continuous professional improvement in your service?

13. What support would you need to enhance continuous professional improvement in your service/school?

Synthesis questions

14. Looking at the three areas we just discussed, what do you think will be the implications for your service/school in implementing these Practice Principles?

15. In which areas will your service/school need most help?

C. Outcomes

There are five outcomes described in the Victorian Framework. These outcomes are consistent with the National Framework. As the Victorian Framework extends the outcomes from birth to eight years, we want to gain your feedback on these outcomes in terms of the service you provide in your community. Below is a list of the outcomes. (Interviewer to hand out card with outcomes listed on them to the practitioner.)

Outcomes	
Identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
Community	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning	Children are confident and involved learners
Communication	Children are effective communicators

The following questions aim to gain a picture of your service in relation to the outcomes.

16. How important are the outcomes to your service?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 **High**

17. What will your service do to apply these outcomes?

18. What challenges do you anticipate in applying these outcomes to your work with children?

19. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these outcomes in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

20. What could be done at your service/school to better attend to these outcomes?

21. How would you know if these outcomes are being addressed by your service/school?

Now I would like you to consider the way your service/school works with families in your community.

22. Can you briefly describe what you currently do to develop partnerships with parents and families?

23. What are the implications of the Victorian Framework for integration of your service/school with other early years professionals?

Areas offering opportunities for improvement

24. What are some challenges you continue to experience at your service/school?

25. What would be helpful to reduce or eliminate these challenges?

Success in improving the service

26. What are some challenges you had in the past, but no longer experience?

27. How were you able to deal with these challenges at your service/school?

28. How did the changes benefit children (from birth to eight years)?

D. General comments

29. What do you think of the Victorian Framework?

30. What do you see as its strengths?

31. What do you see as its weaknesses?

32. How relevant is the Victorian Framework to your service/school?

33. How relevant is the Victorian Framework to the age group (under three year olds, three to five year olds, or five to eight year olds – school setting) you predominately work with?

E. Current needs

34. What do you see as the potential barriers in your service/school to implement the Practice Principles and Outcomes of the Victorian Framework? (Display laminated sheets.)

35. At this point in time, at what level do you feel your service/school is addressing the Practice Principles of the Victorian Framework? (*Remind practitioner to refer to the laminated Practice Principles card.*)

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

36. What do you currently need to assist you for the implementation of the Victorian Framework in 2010?

Thank you for your time. The next step for me is to prepare a summary of our discussion and send it back to you for checking and approval. I will be returning to interview you again during the trial to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of the Victorian Framework to your practice.

The information from these interviews will then be analysed with information from other early years sites involved in the trial. This information will be used to re-draft the Victorian Framework, and identify areas where we will need to provide further support.

Introduction for second interview with practitioner in the trial and validation process of the draft Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

When we last met, we talked about your views of the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (Victorian Framework) and the implications for your service.

This second interview is intended to explore your thinking about the Victorian Framework since we last met and to discuss how you may have been shaping your program in light of the Victorian Framework.

Our aim is to gain an understanding of promising practices and examples of what Victorian services are doing to promote outcomes for children.

We would like to highlight some of these examples in support material we produce.

You may feel you have had insufficient time to modify any elements of your current program and, in this case, we are keen to hear your plans to reshape your program in light of the Victorian Framework.

Perhaps you could choose one or two key areas that you would like to work on now or during the implementation phase in 2010. We can explore your ideas in depth during our interview.

TEMPLATE 4

Proforma template for early years site visits interview with the practitioner (nominated by the manager/principal at the service/school).

Explaining the purpose of the site visits: Suggested script to frame the conversation

In the time since our last site visit, you have had some time to become more familiar with the Victorian Framework in relation to your service.

In this second site visit we want to ask you many of the same questions we did in the first site visit, with some small exceptions. Some of your responses may be the same as they were in the first site visit, and some may be quite different. Just give the most accurate response you can for each question in relation to how it relates to today, at this point in time.

This will give us an opportunity to learn how sites across Victoria are becoming familiar with the Victorian Framework, and how their needs are evolving.

This is important information for us so we can better provide support throughout Victoria.

We appreciate your time and willingness to help us with the information we need.

Practitioner name: _____ **Support person** _____

Practitioner profile: What is the age group of the children with whom you **predominantly** work? (Circle one)

under three year olds

three to five year olds

*five to eight years old
(school setting)*

A. Current practice

1. What are the current learning and development objectives for children at your service/school?

B. Major areas of the early childhood professional's work (Practice Principles in the Victorian Framework)

Collaborative practice

(Incorporating the principles of Family Centred Practice, Partnerships, and Equity and Diversity)

2. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

3. What does your service do to encourage collaborative practice?

4. What makes it challenging for your service to promote collaborative practice?

5. What support would you need to improve collaborative practice at your service/school?

High quality teaching and learning

(Incorporating the principles of *Responsive Engagement with Children* and *An Holistic Approach to Learning and Development*)

6. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

7. What does your service do to encourage high quality teaching and learning?

8. What makes it challenging to effectively deliver high quality teaching and learning?

9. What support would you need to better deliver high quality teaching and learning?

Continuous professional improvement (Incorporating the principle of *Reflective Practice*)

10. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

11. What does your service do to encourage continuous professional improvement?

12. What makes it challenging to encourage continuous professional improvement in your service?

13. What support would you need to enhance continuous professional improvement in your service/school?

Synthesis questions

14. Looking at the three areas we just discussed, what do you think will be the implications for your service/school in implementing these Practice Principles?

15. In which areas will your service/school need most help?

C. Outcomes

Outcomes

Identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
Community	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning	Children are confident and involved learners
Communication	Children are effective communicators

The following questions aim to gain a picture of your service in relation to the outcomes.

16. How important are the outcomes to your service?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 **High**

17. What will your service do to apply these outcomes?
18. What challenges do you anticipate in applying these outcomes to your work with children?
19. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these outcomes in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

20. Do the five Victorian Early Years Outcomes support the identification of children's needs?
21. Do the five Victorian Early Years Outcomes support your discussions with families about early identification and referral processes?
22. What could be done at your service/school to better attend to these outcomes?
23. How would you know if these outcomes are being addressed by your service/school?

Now I would like you to consider the way your service/school works with families in your community.

24. Can you briefly describe what you currently do to develop partnerships with parents and families?
25. What are the implications of the Victorian Framework for integration of your service/school with other early years professionals?

Areas offering opportunities for improvement

26. What are some challenges you continue to experience at your service/school?
27. What would be helpful to reduce or eliminate these challenges?

Success in improving the service

28. What are some challenges you had in the past, but no longer experience?
29. How were you able to deal with these challenges at your service/school?
30. How did the changes benefit children (from birth to eight years)?

D. General comments

31. What do you think of the Victorian Framework?
32. What do you see as its strengths?
33. What do you see as its weaknesses?
34. How relevant is the Victorian Framework to your service/school?
35. How relevant is the Victorian Framework to the age group (under three year olds, three to five year olds, or five to eight year olds – school setting) you predominately work with?

E. Current needs

36. What do you see as the potential barriers in your service/school to implement the Practice Principles and Learning Outcomes of the Victorian Framework? (display laminated sheets)

37. At this point in time, at what level do you feel your service/school is addressing the Practice Principles of the Victorian Framework? (*Remind practitioner to refer to the laminated Practice Principles card.*)

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

38. What do you currently need to assist you for the implementation of the Victorian Framework in 2010?

Thank you for your time. The next step for me is to prepare a summary of our discussion and send it back to you for checking and approval. This was my final visit in this trial.

The information from these interviews will then be analysed with information from other early years sites involved in the trial. This information will be used to identify areas where we will need to provide further support.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework PAG participant trial and validation guidelines 10 August – 23 October 2009

Purpose

The aims of the trial and validation process are to:

- capture the thoughts and experiences of early childhood professionals as they interpret the VEYLDF
- contribute to the ongoing development of the VEYLDF and supporting documents
- provide case study examples of current practice.

Focus/orientation

Participants will be asked for their views on the draft VEYLDF and their experiences of implementing the VEYLDF in their centre/service/school. Issues that will require consideration are:

- comments on the document in terms of the useability and practicality of the content, concepts and continuity
- responses to the *Victorian Early Years Outcomes* and how these outcomes inform staff in the planning and implementation of their program
- responses to the *Practice Principles for Learning and Development* and how educators/staff apply these understandings to their work with children
- families perspectives on the VEYLDF
- children's views
- approaches to interpreting and implementing the draft VEYLDF, e.g. how are educators/staff stimulated/challenged to think or do things differently
- ways of identifying whether the VEYLDF is working effectively
- any concerns they might have about the VEYLDF
- any recommendations for further development of the VEYLDF and implementation
- practical examples that might be included in the Supporting Documents.

Getting Started

- Decide on your 'entry point' to the VEYLDF.
- Identify strategies to gather information on:
 - *Victorian Early Years Outcomes*
 - *Practice Principles for Learning and Development*
 - children's views (optional).
- Look for the familiar or the more challenging content in the VEYLDF.
- Agree on processes for regular meetings/discussions to work through the VEYLDF with colleagues.
- Organise to distribute family survey (see Template 2).
- Identify strategies to collect children's views (optional)

Suggestions for reflective thinking about the VEYLDF

- What is your initial response to the document when you read through it?
- What are some of the things you thought about or would like to talk with others about?
- Were there things in the document that concerned you?
- What did you most like about the document?

Suggestions for reflective thinking about the Victorian Early Years Outcomes

- Is the document compatible with your current practices of planning and assessing? If not, what is different? Think of specific examples of practice.
- What might you do differently as a result of this document?
- If you intend to make changes, what supports will be needed to make the changes successful?
- What (if any) concerns do you have about the outcomes and assessment reflected in this document?

Suggestions for reflective thinking about the Practice Principles for Learning and Development

- Are the outlined principles compatible with your current professional practice? If not, what is different? Think of specific examples of practice.
- What might you do differently as a result of this document?
- If you intend to make changes what supports will be needed to make the changes successful?
- How do you intend to document changes to practice as a result.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework PAG participant trial and validation process

1. Complete Practitioner Proforma 1 at the beginning of the trial period
2. Make comments in dot point format in both Part A, Part B and Part C.
3. Complete rating scales
4. When completed please forward to:
Paula Silveira
Early Years Unit
VCAA
41 St Andrews Place East Melbourne VIC 3002
5. Complete Practitioner Proforma 2 toward the end of the trial period
6. Make comments in dot point format in all sections.
7. Please send to:
Paula Silveira
Early Years Unit
VCAA
41 St Andrews Place East Melbourne VIC 3002
by **18 October 2009**

Practitioner Proforma 1

Name of practitioner:

Name of service:

A. Practice Principles for Learning and Development

We want to gain feedback on how you see the six Practice Principles in relation to the service you provide.

Collaborative Practice

(Incorporating the principles of *Family Centred Practice, Partnerships and Equity and Diversity*)

1. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?
In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**
2. What does your service do to encourage collaborative practice?
3. What makes it challenging for your service to promote collaborative practice?

High quality teaching and learning

(incorporating the principles of *Responsive Engagement with Children and An Holistic Approach to Learning and Development*)

4. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?
In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**
5. What does your service do to encourage high quality teaching and learning?
6. What makes it challenging to effectively deliver high quality teaching and learning?

Continuous professional improvement

(Incorporating the principle of *Reflective Practice*)

7. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?
In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**
8. What does your service do to encourage continuous professional improvement?
9. What makes it challenging to encourage continuous professional improvement in your service?

B. Victorian Early Years Outcomes

10. What are your current objectives for children's learning and development in your service?

There are five outcomes described in the VEYLDF. These outcomes are consistent with the National Framework for birth to age five. The Victorian Framework extends the outcomes for children from birth to age eight. We want to gain feedback from you on these outcomes in terms of the service you provide. Here is a list of the outcomes:

Outcomes	
Identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
Community	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning	Children are confident and involved learners
Communication	Children are effective communicators

The following questions aim to gain a picture of your service in relation to the outcomes.

11. How important are the outcomes to your service:

Low 1 2 3 4 5 **High**

12. What will your service do to apply these outcomes?

13. What challenges do you anticipate in applying these outcomes to your work with children?

14. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these outcomes in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

C. Current practice

15. Can you briefly describe what you currently do to develop partnerships with parents and families?

16. How do you anticipate the Victorian Framework will influence the way you support children and families to make the transition between early years services and into school?

When completed please forward to:

Paula Silveira

Early Years Unit

VCAA

41 St Andrews Place East Melbourne VIC 3002

Practitioner Proforma 2

(To be completed toward the end of the trial period)

A. Practice Principles for Learning and Development

We want to gain feedback on how the six Practice Principles have impacted on your program and practice in relation to the service you provide.

Collaborative Practice

- Family Centred
- Practice Partnerships
- Equity and Diversity

1. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

2. Please describe any changes made to practice as a result of the VEYLDF.

High Quality Teaching and Learning

- Responsive Engagement with Children
- An Holistic Approach to Learning and Development

3. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

4. Please describe any changes made to practice as a result of the VEYLDF.

Continuous Professional Improvement

- Reflective Practice

5. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these principles in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

6. Please describe any changes made to practice as a result of the VEYLDF.

B. Victorian Early Years Outcomes

Outcomes

Identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
Community	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Wellbeing	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Learning	Children are confident and involved learners
Communication	Children are effective communicators

7. At this point in time, what level do you think you are addressing these outcomes in your service?

In part 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Completely**

8. Please describe changes you have made to your practice and/or program in applying these outcomes.

9. Please comment on any impact the outcomes have had on your assessment/documentation processes of children's learning.

C. Current practice

10. In what ways has the Victorian Framework influenced your practice with families?
Please briefly describe any changes that you have made to improve partnerships with families.

11. Has the Victorian Framework influenced the way you support children and families to make the transition between early years services and into school? If so, please describe:

12. Please describe any other changes to your thinking or practice as a result of the VEYLDF.

D. Key program features

13. What do you see as the things are unique to your program and/or practice.

14. Please provide one practice example to demonstrate the impact of the VEYLDF on your service from this trial process.

E. General comments

15. What do you think of the Victorian Framework in relation to your service and community?

16. The Victorian Framework will be implemented in 2010. What would you need to assist you and your service to implement the Victorian Framework?

Please complete and return by **19 October 2009** to:

Paula Silveira

Early Years Unit

VCAA

41 St Andrews Place

East Melbourne VIC 3002

Appendix 3: The strengths and limitations of the data

The data for this report were collected by a number of interviewers, and in a number of different forms. Therefore, it is appropriate to indicate the relative strengths and limitations of the data from which this report is based.

Strengths of the data:

The data included in this report represents a broad cross-section of individuals who work with children from birth to eight years. Clear themes that emerged from this data represent attitudes and beliefs strong enough to become prevalent even among the heterogeneous sample with a range of interviewers and methods of data collection.

The themes that emerge in relation to the Victorian Framework are underpinned by both qualitative and quantitative data, and by an array of questions designed to elicit attitudes and beliefs about the introduction and implementation of the Victorian Framework. Very strong themes emerged relating to the value that respondents saw in the Victorian Framework and the related needs that respondents have if they are to successfully implement the Victorian Framework.

While a limitation of the trial was the heterogeneous nature of the sample in terms of trying to put too fine a point on the differences between groups, this same heterogeneous sample is a strength. It is a reflection of the nature of early childhood services in the Victoria. This data reflects the nature of the heterogeneous group of service providers in the state.

Limitations of the data:

All survey data carry within it a level of sampling error. This means that due to the imperfect nature of understanding the meaning of questions and the differences among individuals in language and interpretation, data will necessarily contain error. It will not be a perfect reflection of actual attitudes of early childhood professionals. There is an attempt to minimise sampling error. For example, a single interviewer is able to ask questions to different respondents in the same way. Multiple interviewers will understand the meanings of questions in different ways, and they will tend to ask questions in different ways. This adds to sampling error. The survey data for this report was collected by multiple interviewers.

Some interviewers allowed respondents to select more than one scaled response, and interviewers necessarily reveal varying levels of engagement during the interview. These variations among interviewers add to the ‘noise’, or the sampling error in the data.

Another limitation of this data is the heterogeneous nature of respondents. Respondents who work with younger children may interpret questions differently than those who work with school aged children. Respondents to these surveys varied not only among the nature of the age group with which they work, but also among urban/rural and among heterogeneous group of workplaces.

These limitations indicate that caution should be taken in attempting to draw a fine point of comparisons between groups. The data that this report is based on has not been highly controlled, therefore small differences in means, and even in attitudes, should be viewed with caution. Still, this data holds much inherent strength.

Treatment of means:

Due to the limitations expressed above, it is not considered appropriate to draw too fine a point on the specific averages (or means) generated in this trial.

The distinctions drawn in this report are considered accurate and appropriate considering the reliability of the data (see below). For those who are interested in viewing the actual means, they are presented in Appendix B, but as is clear from this section caution should be used in interpreting these means.

Reliability of the data:

Whatever data is collected reliability is important. Reliability refers to the ability of the data to measure precisely, in a non-random fashion. For example, when considering the current data if the multiple data collectors were to have caused participants to respond to questions in a way that was inconsistent with the total group then the reliability of the data would be in question.

Two measurements indicate that the data this report is based on is reliable. Three sets of data were collected from early childhood professionals, data from the first interview, data from a second interview, and data from a PAG group of early years early childhood professionals.

There was a total consistency in these three data sets relating to how early childhood professionals believed their services were currently attending to the three principles. Continuous professional improvement, in all three data sets,

was viewed as being best attended to currently, and Collaborative Practice, in all three data sets was viewed as being the least best attended to currently. This consistency indicates an understanding of the questions, a motivation to answer questions accurately, and reliability of the data.

Reliability was also tested with a Cronbach alpha test of internal consistency reliability. This is the most common statistic used to test the reliability of datasets, and it is able to test the reliability of data on a single construct.

To perform this test on the current data the construct of 'Current Alignment with the Principles and Outcomes of the Framework' was used, as measured by the questions relating to:

- currently addressing Collaborative Practice
- currently addressing High Quality Teaching and Learning
- currently addressing Continuous Professional Improvement
- currently addressing the Outcomes
- currently addressing the Practice Principles.

A Cronbach alpha of .741 was revealed. Alphas over .70 are considered reliable. Therefore, considering the multiple interviewers, and the heterogeneous nature of the services being surveyed, this data were remarkably consistent, with a level of reliability equal to many standardised measures.

Appendix 4: Means – PAG survey sites and interview trial sites

Note: The Ns in these tables will sometimes vary, as not all questions were answered by all participants.

Table 1

Current alignment with Principles and Outcomes of the Framework, by group (scaled 1–10)						
Template group		Currently addressing Collaborative Practice	Currently addressing High Quality Teaching and Learning	Currently addressing Continuous Professional Improvement	Currently addressing the Outcomes	Currently addressing the Practice Principles
Managers V1	Mean	7.2632	7.7500	7.6471	7.0789	7.4167
	N	19	18	17	19	18
	Std. Deviation	1.86613	1.27475	.89730	1.58345	1.33119
Early childhood professionals V1	Mean	7.1923	7.4615	7.6538	7.3200	7.4792
	N	26	26	26	25	24
	Std. Deviation	1.31207	1.03849	1.35476	1.51300	1.35518
Early childhood professionals V2	Mean	7.3125	7.4458	7.7917	7.2609	7.3571
	N	24	24	24	23	21
	Std. Deviation	1.27529	1.27381	1.46641	1.49141	1.17413
PAGS1	Mean	7.2778	7.6667	7.6667	7.4722	
	N	18	18	18	18	
	Std. Deviation	.82644	1.23669	1.23669	1.24230	
PAGS2	Mean	8.1765	8.3235	8.4412	7.9706	
	N	17	17	17	17	
	Std. Deviation	.80896	1.31031	1.19742	2.09516	
Total	Mean	7.4087	7.6864	7.8186	7.3971	7.4206
	N	104	103	102	102	63

Table 2

Importance of Framework Outcomes (scaled 1–5)			
Template group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Managers V1	4.9500	20	.15390
Early childhood professionals V1	4.7885	26	.61924
Early childhood professionals V2	4.8125	24	.52776
PAGS1	4.8889	18	.32338
Total	4.8523	88	.46212

Table 3

Early childhood professionals ratings by age of children they work with			
Age group of children		Currently addressing the Outcomes	Currently addressing the Practice Principles
Works with 0 to 3	Mean	6.7500	7.0769
	N	12	13
	Std. Deviation	1.50000	1.20496
Works with 5 to 8	Mean	8.0227	8.0263
	N	22	19
	Std. Deviation	1.13889	1.04713
Total	Mean	7.5735	7.6406
	N	34	32
	Std. Deviation	1.39877	1.19295

Appendix 5: Consultations with children – summary

Service type	Outcome	Age of children	Topics covered and method of data collection	Findings
OSHC school holiday program	Learning	Three children x 5/6 years Five to eight children x 7/8 years	Topic – Play and learning Individual interviews Group discussions	<p>Children identified learning in social settings, with and from friends as important. Play and friendship were significant aspects. Children clearly identified the difference between ‘work’ and ‘play’ and the settings in which this occurred.</p> <p>Older children reported agreed play and learning could occur simultaneously but the younger children felt that they were different things and did not happen together.</p> <p><i>‘Learning is [when] someone is teaching you something and play is something you know already.’</i></p>
Funded kindergarten program	Learning	Two children x 4 years	Topic – Learning and interests Individual interviews	<p>A child with autism (and limited vocabulary) was photographed to demonstrate interests in inquiry and learning. This highlighted the importance of visual documentation to hear all children’s voices.</p> <p>Both children’s preferred specific interests were identified for program planning purposes. Literacy activities were reported by second child (spelling, reading and writing).</p> <p>Playing was identified as an important aspect in kindergarten.</p> <p><i>‘Learn how to help the world and to look after other people.’</i> <i>‘You can learn from your mum or dad or grandpa.’</i></p>

Service type	Outcome	Age of children	Topics covered and method of data collection	Findings
Funded kindergarten program	Wellbeing	Six children x 4/5 years	Topic – Happiness Individual interviews Small group discussion	<p>Children listed; holidays, friends, playing, family, pets, gardening and sharing toys in providing general happiness.</p> <p>Children identified; smiling, laughing, and hugging as ways of seeing happiness. Feeling happy at the kindergarten included; playing, demonstrating positive behaviour, fun interactions, the outdoor environment and being seen as happy.</p> <p><i>Happiness feels like: ‘It feels like my heart thumping, “my eyes would be shining, my mouth would be smiling and inside I would have a nice feeling”’.</i></p>
Integrated children’s centre	Community	20 individual children aged 2–5 years Five group meetings	Topic – Transition Individual meetings Group meetings	<p>Being with friends is seen to be an important part of any transition process. This was demonstrated by both the toddlers and the older children going to school next year.</p> <p>Playing was seen as important to do at school as was; painting, drawing and reading books</p> <p>Learning was seen as the essential aspect of the perceived new school environment</p> <p><i>‘You have to do your homework, and don’t fight when you go home. And the bell rings, its lunchtime. And you can play inside and outside.’</i></p> <p><i>‘School just looks like day care except big.’</i></p>

Appendix 6: Focus group with parents – summary

Characteristics of the parents in the focus groups

Focus Group Location	Number of participants	Age range of parents (31–40)	Age range of parents (41–50)	Age range of children			
				>3	3–5	5–8	9+
Catholic primary school (Melbourne)	7 females	4 parents	3 parents	1	5	5	8
Government primary school (Geelong)	10 (9 female and 1 male)	4 parents	6 parents	3	11	5	3
Integrated long day care centre (Melbourne)	5 females	3 parents	2 parents	1	5	1	6

A comprehensive summary of the focus groups was prepared by the consultant who moderated the focus groups. This section draws on this summary document and presents key messages from these parents in a matrix form.

Focal area	Themes
What is important to parents in their children's development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence and social development • Cognitive development and sense of curiosity • Sense of identity • Being happy • Learning to accept and get along with different religious and cultural groups • Physical health and emotional development • Access to support services
Parental views of the learning Outcomes in the Victorian Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes will help parents to identify and discuss issues • Provide a common language • Families need to be informed about the Victorian Framework and the outcomes
How parents assess if their child is achieving milestones/ developing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing with peers and other children • MCH services and milestone checks. Parents expressed concern about limited opportunities for feedback from birth to three years if child is not involved in childcare services • Kindergarten and school teachers. Noted a gap in support and assessment for the birth to five years age group and lack of consistency of assessment
Most appropriate way to share information about the Victorian Framework with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and concise: Language used needs to be simpler and the outcomes explained more clearly. Identity and community appeared less clear than the others • Presented in multiple formats written, DVD, television, Internet and multiple times • Provide guidance: Outline where to go for support and provide more guidance for parents with children with additional needs • Practical and positive: Focus on what parents can do • Differentiate focus on birth to three years: Language and examples used for birth to three years age group needs to be different/currently very education focused

Appendix 7: Online responses

Early childhood professionals

Two hundred and thirty-four early childhood professionals visited the early childhood professionals' survey, 50 left no responses, 58 provided rich responses.

The range of professionals included literacy coordinators, teachers (primary and EC), team leaders, directors, managers, group leaders, assistant coordinators, field officers, activity group leaders, speech pathologists, program coordinators, an accreditation support worker, directors of the early learning centres, an ESL specialist, junior school coordinators, a paediatric dietician, a psychologist, a curriculum coordinator – program for students with disabilities coordination intervention and extension programs, a transition coordinator, maternal and child health managers, a third-year graduate.

Managers/principals

Sixty-one managers visited the managers' survey, 17 left no responses, 18 provided rich responses.

The range of participants and the settings included directors – OSHC, LDC, ELC, early intervention; assistant directors – LDC, kindergarten, and primary schools; owners – LDC; managers – community liaison, LGA; children's services, LDC (integrated program), cluster manager, MCH; support facilitator – LDC; team leader – vacation care; coordinator – OSHC, FDC; principal – school and kinder, primary school, private primary school; assistant principal – special school.

Families

Four family representatives visited the family's survey section of the VCAA website feedback on the VEYLDF.

Students

Sixteen students visited the students' survey. Most were completing Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, or Diploma of Children's Services.

Peak bodies/organisations

Fifteen contributions were received from representatives from peak bodies including:

- universities (Deakin, Swinburne, RMIT, Melbourne)
- Institute of Education at the Royal Children's Hospital
- Kindergarten Parents Victoria
- Melton Shire Council
- Kidsafe
- Community Child Care
- Kids – 'Go for your life' managed by Cancer Council Victoria and Diabetes Australia – Vic.