EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

QUALITY AREA 1 – EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure that the educational program (curriculum) and practice at Sparkways is:

- based on an approved learning framework (WLYF, MTOP, VEYLDF)
- centred on the child's learning, development, wellbeing and safety
- designed to take into account the individual differences of each child; and
- based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child

POLICY STATEMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sparkways is committed to:

- supporting each child to achieve learning outcomes consistent with the national *Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to Sources)
- providing an educational program where children can learn through play and are supported to make decisions, problem-solve and build relationships with others
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- involving families in the development and review of educational program and practice

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Sparkways, including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensuring that the educational program is: • based on an approved learning framework *(refer to Definitions)* • delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework • based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child • designed to take in account the individual differences of each child *(National Law: Section 168)* and when used, that digital technologies are used appropriately *(refer to Attachment 1)*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring the educational program contributes to each child: • developing a strong sense of identity • being connected with, and contributing to, their world • having a strong sense of wellbeing • being a confident and involved learner • being an effective communicator *(Regulation 73)*	**R**	√	√		√
Designating a suitably qualified and experienced Educational Leader to direct the development and implementation of educational programs at the service *(Regulation 118)*	**R**				
Ensuring that the service's philosophy guides educational program and practice	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring that assessments of each child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program are documented *(Regulation 74(1)(a)(i))*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring that assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program are documented *(Regulation 74(1)(a)(ii))*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring that each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documentation and evaluation	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring documentation of assessments includes reflection on the period of time the child is at the service, and how documented information will be used by educators at the service *(Regulation 74(2)(a)(i)&(ii))*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring documentation is written in plain language and is easy to understand by both educators and parents/guardians *(Regulation 74(2)(b))*	**R**	√	√		√

RESPONSIBILITIES

	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Ensuring that there is a record of learning and development for each child, and that it is updated and maintained on an ongoing basis	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring the information about the contents and operation of the educational program is displayed at a place that is accessible to parents and families *(Regulation 75)*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuing a copy of the educational program is available for inspection on request *(Regulation 75)*	**R**	√			
Ensuring that families are provided with information about the content and operation of the educational program, information about their child's participation in the program and a copy of assessments or evaluations of their child *(Regulation 76)*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring regular communication is established between the service and parents/guardians, and they are informed about their child's learning, development and progress	**R**	√	√	√	√
Undertaking critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation	**R**	√	√		√
Developing and evaluating the educational program in collaboration with the nominated supervisor, educators, children and families.	**R**	√	√	√	√

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law) requires services to deliver an educational program (curriculum) that is based on an approved learning framework. In Victoria, approved learning frameworks for the early childhood sector are the *Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming) (refer to Sources)*, the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (refer to Sources)* and *My Time Our Place, Framework for School age care in Australia (refer to Source).* These documents are underpinned by practices and principles that encourage reflection and provide educators with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood curriculum in a contemporary context.

Part 4.1 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (National Regulations)* outlines the operational requirements for educational program and practice within services,

including the requirements for documentation of assessments in relation to the educational program. There is no prescribed method in the *National Law or National Regulations* for documenting assessment of children's learning. Educators daily practice and curriculum decision-making should be guided by an approved learning framework. An approved learning framework provides broad direction for educators to facilitate children's learning. Each service must determine a method that suits their individual circumstances. To meet the documentation requirements of the *National Regulations*, the assessment must include an analysis of children's learning. Collecting this information enables educators to plan effectively for each child's learning and development. It can also be used by educators to stimulate reflection on their own values, beliefs and teaching practices, and to communicate about children's learning with children and their families.

The *National Law and Regulations* provide no specific guidelines for documenting educational programs, assessments, or evaluations, allowing services to choose electronic, visual, or paper-based methods that suit their needs. The amount and method of documentation will vary based on factors such as the number, ages, and capabilities of the children, as well as their attendance frequency. Services are encouraged to explore and select the styles and methods that best support their children, families, and educators.

The *National Regulations* require the appointment of an Educational Leader to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) at the service *(Regulation 118)*. This person will have suitable qualifications and experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, enabling them to guide other educators in planning and reflection, and to mentor colleagues in implementation practices *(Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations, p85 – refer to Sources).*

The aim of *Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice* of *The National Quality Standard* is to ensure that the educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging and enhances children's learning and development.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
- Standard 1.1: The educational program enhances each child's learning and development
- Standard 1.2: Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development
- Standard 1.3: Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the Sparkways policy catalogue.

Approved learning framework: A document that outlines practices that educators and co-ordinators must use to support and promote children's learning. *The Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming), the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* and *My Time, Our Place; Framework for School Age Care in Australia* are approved learning frameworks for use in Victoria *(refer to Sources)*.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework	The Early Years Learning Framework 2022 V2 (Belonging, Being & Becoming)	My Time, Our Place; Framework for School Age Care in Australia 2022 V2

Critical reflection: Reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice *(Early Years Learning Framework – refer to Sources).*

Curriculum: All interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development *(Early Years Learning Framework– refer to Sources; adapted from Te Whariki).*

Each child: A phrase used in the *National Quality Standard* when an individualised approach is warranted, and educators are required to modify their response to meet the needs of an individual child. An example is 'each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture and interests provide the foundation for the program'.

Educational Leader: The approved provider of an education and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual to lead the development and implementation of educational programs at the service *(Regulation 118)*. This person must have a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (or other approved learning framework), be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in the implementation of their practice.

Educational program: a program referred to in section 168 of the Law. An educational program is to contribute to the following outcomes for each child:

- the child will have a strong sense of identity;
- the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world;
- the child will have a strong sense of wellbeing;
- the child will be a confident and involved learner;
- the child will be an effective communicator.

Learning: A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth, as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.

Learning framework: Refer to approved learning framework above.

Learning outcome: A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families.

Play-based learning: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social world as they engage actively with people, objects and representations

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – *The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks
- *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/resource-finder
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/marrung.aspx
- *Marrung – Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026*
- My Time Our Place, Framework for School age care in Australia: https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks
- *Early Childhood Australia Professional Learning Modules* https://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/modules/
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* – Resources for Professionals: https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks

RELATED POLICES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Code of Conduct
- Environmental Sustainability
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interactions with Children
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Participation of Volunteers, Students and Contractors
- Road Safety Education and Safe Transport
- Sun Protection
- Supervision of Children
- Water Safety

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- seek feedback from people affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2)*.

ATTACHMENTS

- Use of digital technology

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by Sparkways on 23 November 2025

REVIEW DUE: November 2026

ATTACHMENT 1

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Overview

To guide educator's pedagogy and practice to use digital platforms to promote children's learning and wellbeing with the use of intentional teaching strategies that are always purposeful and may be pre-planned or spontaneous, to support achievement of well-considered and identified goals.

Guidelines

Educators may use digital technologies as the most appropriate way of engaging children for short periods of time, **providing this activity is led by the educator to further children's learning.**

This may include:

- to scaffold and deepen children's interest
- to source information for inquiry-based project work
- for guided rest periods of relaxation and yoga
- for guided music, dance and movement sessions
- for intentional teaching of concepts
- to support children to communicate ideas and needs
- as part of a set of strategies documented in a child's Behaviour Management Plan

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend:

- children aged less than 2 years should not have any screen time
- children aged 2 to 5 years should limit screen time to less than one hour a day and
- children aged 5 to 12 years should limit screen time, for entertainment purposes, to

Digital platforms can offer purposeful opportunities and be used as a tool to strengthen children's learning. Educators can use technology thoughtfully in all aspects of their program with intentionality to enrich children's learning experiences.

The use of technology is not to be used without the supervision and guidance of an educator and this is to be for limited use during the day

Educators should role model healthy behaviours and use of digital technology to help children to develop good habits. In addition to technology, consider alternative means to extend children's learning: -

- Storytelling
- Reference books
- Science experiences
- Project work
- Incursions
- Family and community resources

Spending long periods of time using technology unsupervised can lead children to:

- delay developing communication and social skills with peers and educators
- have a negative impact on gross motor skills and cognitive development
- be less ready for school and find it harder to learn to read and concentrate
- reduce the ability to regulate emotions and can cause behaviour issues
- become over stimulated and difficulty to focus

Sources

- Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- ACECQA
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
- American Academy of Paediatricians (AAP)

References

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/newsletters/acecqa-newsletter-issue-3-2015

https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=callout-auto-custom&utm_campaign=digital_transformation

www.rchpoll.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACHP-Poll7_Detailed-Report-June21.pdf