



Cloncurry Shire Council

**PROCEDURE
NO.**

CKP – QA1002-01

CRITICAL REFLECTION PROCEDURE

1. INFORMATION

It is vital for early childhood educators to engage in critical reflection in order to:

- Grow and develop as a professional,
- Provide high quality care and education for children,
- Confidently articulate why they do what they do with families and regulatory authorities, and
- Engage in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Critical Reflection guides quality programs, practices and learning environments for the children. It is essential that we know how to engage in reflective practices daily, as this will ensure we are embedding critical reflection, which will ultimately provide quality outcomes for children.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

All team members, students, visitors and volunteers must comply with this procedure.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 WHAT IS CRITICAL REFLECTION?

“Critical reflection: is a meaning-making process that assists informing future practice in ways that demonstrate an understanding of each child’s learning, development and wellbeing and implications for equity and social justice. It involves examining and analysing events, experiences and practices from a range of perspectives to inform future planning and decision-making” (DEEWR, 2022).

3.2 REFLECTION VS CRITICAL REFLECTION

As early childhood professionals, it’s important to know and articulate the difference between the terms and actions involved with reflection and critical reflection. According to the EYLF v2.0, “reflection involves educators thinking intentionally about their own and others’ practices, with certain aims or goals in mind. [Whilst] critical reflection is a meaning-making process that involves a deeper level of thinking and evaluation. It requires engagement with diverse perspectives such as philosophy, theory, ethics and practice and then evaluating these in context, leading to pedagogical decisions and actions that are transformative” (DEEWR, 2022).

Therefore, we encourage and support our teams to work independently and collaboratively to discover and critically reflect various perspectives regarding their own programs, practices, and learning environments. Through this practice, we are able to ‘ demonstrate an understanding of each child’s learning, development and wellbeing, and any implications for equity and social justice’ (DEEWR, 2022).

3.3 MODEL OF CRITICAL REFLECTION (ADAPTED FROM CARTMEL, MACFARLANE & CASLEY 2013)

Below is an adapted version of a model of critical reflection created by Cartmel, Macfarlane and Casley, 2013 (Appendix 1). The 4 steps in the model are:

- 1) Deconstruct
- 2) Confront
- 3) Theorise
- 4) Think Otherwise

Links to their work, and others, can be found in the “*References*” section and it is recommended you consult and use these when engaging in critical reflection.

3.3.1. DECONSTRUCT

- Pull apart the thinking or practice that is being discussed.
- Take a critical look at what you consider to be “normal” or “the way we do things”.
- Question why?
- Take a deep dive into the practice and examine it in detail.
- Consider common words or phrases being discussed.
- Ask what the team members saw, felt, heard, during the experience.

The EYLF v2.0 (2022) provides a number of critically reflective questions that can guide you and your team as you deconstruct practices and events. Consider the following questions:

- What is our understanding of each child, their culture and context?
- What questions do we have about our work? What are we challenged by? What are we curious about? What are we confronted by in relation to our own biases?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist our work?
- In what ways – if any – are the theories, knowledges and world views that we usually draw on to make sense of what we do limiting our practice?
- What other theories or knowledge and world views could help us make sense of what we have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect our practice?
- Who is advantaged/included when we work in this way? Who is disadvantaged, excluded or silenced?

3.3.2. CONFRONT

- In this phase you will be confronting and discussing issues that might be considered difficult, or things that aren’t discussed, and therefore it is critical that the group is a safe space that allows for these conversations, and supports and enables people to share their points of view and ideas openly.
- Beliefs may be challenged.
- Consider asking the group to reassess the situation from a different point of view or from the view of the child.

- Are there unique advantages or disadvantages in continuing to think, and believe that way?

3.3.3. THEORISE

- Summarise the thinking and conversation. In this phase we link theory to practice..
- Is there research that supports or considers the practice?
- Is there new research that provides evidence for doing things differently, or in a new way?

ACECQA (2016) suggests that we “look outside the service and engage with people, ideas, research, theory and innovations happening in the wider community can support educators to gain a different perspective and to ask questions such as: How do others see the issue? What are others doing? What does research tell us? Drawing on a range of theories and contemporary research can help challenge traditional ways of teaching and learning”.

3.3.4. THINK OTHERWISE

- In this stage we challenge ourselves, and each other, to think outside the dominant framework, and the approach we take in our practice.
- Being able to critically reflect is very important and is a skill that helps people to learn and grow.
- Ask the group to reflect on their practice, thinking and beliefs.
- Is there another way to look at the situation?
- Are they comfortable with the way they handled a situation?
- Is there something they would like to improve or develop professionally or personally?
- Are there new ideas in thinking and practice that the Centre could consider implementing?

3.4. IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER!

- Only when educators feel comfortable, safe, and supported can you have honest and authentic conversations. ACECQA (2016) states that:
“Educators are more likely to engage in reflective practice when there is a culture of openness and trust where everyone has a voice and is listened to, not just the most powerful or vocal members of the group. Individuals need to feel that they can question, offer ideas, and raise concerns about their own and the service’s practice. Recognising there is no single or ‘right’ way to approach complex issues is also an important element in supporting reflective practice”
- Collaboratively establish your agreed “ways of working” e.g.: one person speaks at a time, respect is to be shown at all times, everyone is encouraged and expected to contribute, etc.
- Sometimes honest and authentic conversations can be hard, but they are important if you want to engage in critical reflection AND work on practice improvement and professional learning and growth.

- Remember to reassure everyone that when thoughts or beliefs are challenged, we are only challenging the thought or belief, not the value of the person who may have that thought or belief.
- The purpose of having set meetings for critical reflections is to promote its importance, ensure it is engaged in, build team relationships, engage in peer-to-peer learning, and establish goals.
- Critical reflections can occur at any time, not just in set meetings. Your team might find they are critically reflecting as individuals or collectively all throughout the day. It is important to consider how these moments are captured - do educators have individual journals to document these moments in? Is there a board for quick post its to be added to at the end of a day?
- It is important to support and encourage parents/caregivers to engage in and provide you with their critical reflections. You could put some reflective questions to them online or in a foyer display, or you could ask them the question directly and request that they think about it and get back to you in a few days. Again, capturing their reflections and if and how they are used to share your program and practices is vital.

3.5. LOGISTICS AND ORGANISATION

- The Nominated Supervisor or Educational Leader should schedule time for critical reflection or require their lead educators to schedule it for room meetings; however all staff should have the opportunity to raise topics or issues they believe are important to critically reflect upon.
- Ensure other topics do not become the priority at critical reflection meetings. For example, if there is an issue with the bins being taken out properly, cover that in a standard operational meeting or communicate it in some other way.
- Critical reflection can occur at extended meetings or over several meetings, and it could be done face to face or using technology.
- You could provide thought provoking moments before critical reflection discussions by sharing an interesting article or video, posing a question on an A3 piece of paper in the staffroom and asking staff to share their thoughts or ideas using post-its, or asking staff to tell you the first word that pops into their head when you bring up a topic or issue.
- ACECQA (2023) suggests to consider the following strategies to support critically reflective practices:
 - Reviewing staffing arrangements and routines to create an environment that is conducive to reflective practice. This might include extended periods of uninterrupted time for educators to closely observe a small group of children, foster closer relationships and provide greater insight into children's thinking and learning.
 - Establishing routines that allow reflection to occur regularly.
 - Each educator might take 10 or 15 minutes during scheduled programming time, or at the end of the day, to record their reflections in a journal or diary. A similar amount of time might be allocated during a regularly scheduled meeting to reflect on practice across the service. These meetings also provide a forum for team members to talk about their personal experiences.

- Encouraging educators to work closely with more experienced colleagues.
- This provides opportunities for both parties to observe, critique and learn from each other; to describe what they noticed about a child's response to an experience and ask questions about why their colleague used a particular strategy.
- Networking with other services.
- Regularly meeting with people in the wider community can provide insights into the way the service is perceived by others. This provides opportunities to explore ways the service can become more responsive to the interests and needs of families and children in the local community.

4. RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS

- QA 1 Educational program and practice Policy
- QA 5 Relationships with children Policy
- QA 5 Interactions and relationships procedure
- QA 5 Inclusion procedure
- QA 5 Behaviour guidance procedure
- QA 6 Family participation procedure
- QA 4 Staff professional development procedure

5. REFERENCES

ACECQA. (2016). Developing a culture of learning through reflective practice. Retrieved 9 February, 2024 from [Quality Area 1 Information Sheet](#)

Cartmel, J. (n.d.). Leading learning circles for educators engaged in study. Retrieved 10 May, 2022 from [Leading Learning Circles for Educators Engaged in Study – a national resource for pedagogical leaders to support their educators undertaking study | Department of Social Services, Australian Government](#)

Cartmel, J., Macfarlane, K., & Casley, M. (2012), Reflection as a tool for quality: Working with the National Quality Standard. Early Childhood Australia: ACT.

Cartmel, J., MacFarlane, K., Casley, M., & Smith, K. (n.d.). Training of Champions for Leading Learning Circles for educators engaged in study. Retrieved 15 July, 2019 from <https://childaware.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/05/Jennifer-Cartmel-Marilyn-Casley.pdf>

Clarke, J. (2021). Simple critical reflection for educators. Retrieved 9 March 2021 from [What is critical reflection for early childhood educators?](#)

Harvard Centre on the Developing Child. (2013). Building adult capabilities to improve child outcomes: A theory of change. Retrieved 9 March 2021 from [Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change](#)

POLICY VERSION AND REVISION INFORMATION

Version No.	Approval	Date Approved	Review Date
1	Chief Executive Officer Philip Keirle	17 October 2024	October 2027

Procedure Approved by: Philip Keirle



Title: Chief Executive Officer

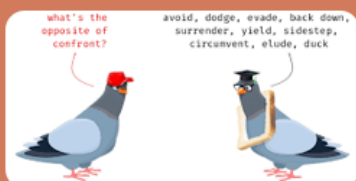
APPENDIX 1:

MODEL OF CRITICAL REFLECTION (adapted from Macfarlane and Cartmel, 2012)



Deconstruct

- Pull apart the thinking or practice that is being discussed.
- Take a critical look at what you consider to be “normal” or “the way we do things”.
- Question why?
- Take a deep dive into the practice and examine it in detail.
- Consider common words or phrases being discussed.
- Ask what was seen, felt, and/or heard, during the experience.



Confront

- Confront and discuss issues that might be considered difficult, or things that aren't normally discussed
- It is critical that the group is a safe space that allows for these conversations, and supports and enables people to share their points of view and ideas openly.
- Beliefs may be challenged.
- Can you reassess the situation from a different point of view or from the view of the child?
- Are there unique advantages or disadvantages in continuing to think, and believe that way?



Theorise

- Summarise the thinking and conversation.
- Link theory to practice.
- Is there research that supports or considers the practice?
- Is there new research that provides evidence for doing things differently, or in a new way?



Think otherwise

- We challenge ourselves, and each other, to think outside the dominant framework, and the approach we take in our practice.
- Reflect on practice, thinking and beliefs.
- Is there another way to look at the situation?
- Are we comfortable with the way the situation was handled?
- Is there something that we would like to improve or develop professionally or personally?
- Are there new ideas in thinking and practice that we could consider implementing?