

Developing Staff Professional Development Plans

A professional development plan will ensure early childhood educators stay abreast of new research, innovations and remain at the forefront of best practice in the early childhood sector.

Steps for creating a professional development plan with individual educators:

- Set goals – write down personal, professional and career goals that are specific, measurable and can realistically be achieved. Include long-term goals but be sure to incorporate short-term goals and monthly targets as practical stepping stones along the way.
- Identify opportunities – identify any additional professional development, educational requirements or skills needed to meet goals such as formal study, mentoring or joining a professional association or networking group.
- Put the plan into action – record the actions you and the educator will take to achieve the goals in the professional development plan.
- Sample headings may include goals; strategies; timeline; evidence of progress; date goal is met and future goals/plans. .
- Review progress – schedule in time to review the plan. The educator may need to re-evaluate the goals and actions that were set originally. Allowing adjustments will ensure the plan is valid and keep the educator on track to achieve their career goals.

Ongoing Professional Learning

The notion of professional practice as a prime source of learning and expertise is as appropriate to early childhood as to any other profession. Learning must be ongoing in order to improve current practices and to acquire new knowledge that will enable new, innovative practices to be introduced. It is inappropriate to perceive professional learning as episodic and/or entirely based on attending workshops.

How to ensure Ongoing Learning occurs in your service:

Share & review learning's for workshop attendance – This is best undertaken by the educators that attended the PD workshop and should include:

- Evaluation of the workshop (suitability of the practice, its ease of use);
- How the learning's can be implemented in the service (possibilities and limitations); and
- Anticipating challenges of implementing change (troubleshooting).

Extending learning's beyond workshop attendees - there is considerable value in extending knowledge gained from workshop beyond the original attendees. This ensures integration of professional development into the life and work of the service. It also assists in building an understanding of where knowledge is held in a service. This includes:

- Who knows what.
- Who is using what.
- Who is doing what and how.
- Who is building links and networking with other educators.

Revisit & refresh from time to time - Professional learning is ongoing and must be revisited for several reasons. This is due to the fact that:

- Some loss of specific knowledge from a PD session is inevitable;
- Commitment is required to be a lifelong learner;
- Learning from other educators is an ongoing process; and
- Professionalism of the sector is enhanced by a broad ongoing commitment to learning.