

How can REFLECT RESPECT RELATE be used for inquiry / reflective practice?

Educators have used it in a range of ways including

- assessing the overall quality of the environment in relation to one or more of the variables
- working with families to consider 'what counts'
- jointly considering ways to create an active learning environment and maximise children's wellbeing and involvement
- assessing children's level of involvement in a particular area or activity
- building professional connections and supporting children through transitions
- as a self assessment tool
- for challenging 'taken for granted' ways of doing and believing
- examining educators' relationships with children (with an equity lens)
- observing individual / focus children / case studies (see above).

While the resource focuses on the birth to age 8 age range there are examples of wider engagement across age groups and disciplines.

The package includes

- **print resource with 3 sections** - introduction and reflective practice, modules for engaging with each Observation Scale and additional resource materials
- **DVD 1** - introducing each variable of curriculum quality, including interviews with educators
- **DVD 2** - with examples for practising scaling
- **DVD 3** - inspirational addresses by Professor Laevers when launching the resource
- **CD** - with examples of practice, PowerPoint presentations and replicable materials
- **loose leaf material for copying.**

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For further information

- 08 8207 2494 (regarding the purchase of additional copies)
- www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au

References

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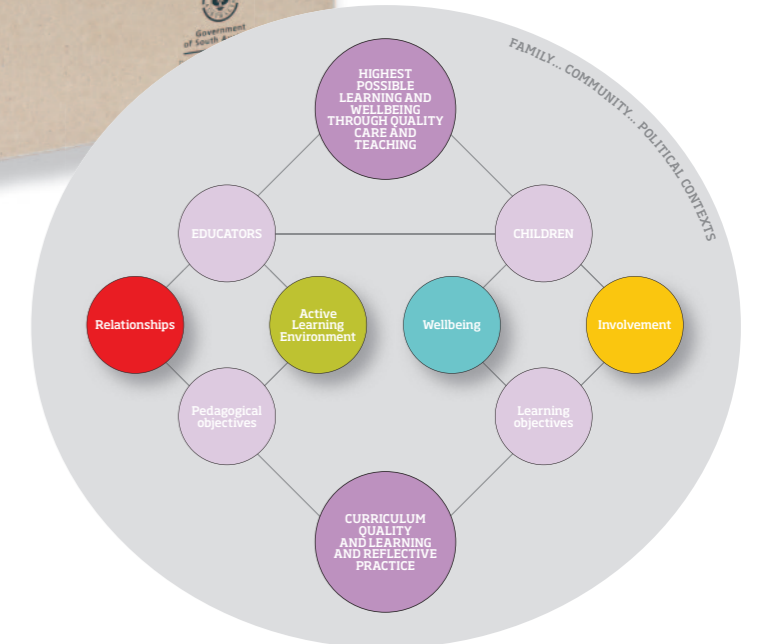
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REFLECT RESPECT RELATE - an overview



Reflect Respect Relate
This diagram illustrates the link between the responsibilities of educators (the environment and relationships) and outcomes for children (wellbeing and involvement). (Adapted from Winter 2003)



What is the focus of the REFLECT RESPECT RELATE resource?

The resource provides a guide for educators to critically reflect on their pedagogy and relationships with children and the connection with children's wellbeing and involvement in learning through the use of four inter-related Observation Scales. It is based on contemporary research and evidence, (see acknowledgments and bibliography). A particular emphasis is placed on **Reflective** practice, **Respect** for children, families and educators and the importance of **Relationships**.

The scales are designed for sampling (random) scanning, rather than screening all children. The focus of the resource is the overall quality of a learning environment or the 'power' of the environment rather than individual children. The use of the scales is both objective (non participant observation using validated criteria) and subjective (involving professional judgement). There is scope for both formal and informal use of the resource.

The resource contributes significantly to increasing awareness and understanding of the relationship between what educators do and outcomes for children.

What is the status of REFLECT RESPECT RELATE?

REFLECT RESPECT RELATE is a resource for supporting the quality of teaching and learning in early childhood settings. There is a strong connection between the underpinning principles, practices and learning outcomes of **BELONGING, BEING & BECOMING: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia**, the principles and the quality areas of the **National Quality Standard** and the underpinning principles and focus of **REFLECT RESPECT RELATE**.

The resource has been made available across Australia by the Australian Government to support engagement with the **Early Years Learning Framework** and the implementation of the **National Quality Standard**.

The background to REFLECT RESPECT RELATE

This resource is based on a research study jointly sponsored by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, the University of South Australia and the Australian Research Council (2004) undertaken by Dr Pam Winter. This research, taking into account previous studies including (Laevers 1994 & 1997, Doherty-Derkowski, 1995, Pascal & Bertram, 1999, Ulich & Mayr, 1999, Bennett, 2000, Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002), demonstrated the strong correlation between four variables of curriculum quality – an active learning environment, relationships, wellbeing and involvement. The involvement scale (one of four) is adapted and used with the permission of Professor Ferre Laevers from the Centre for Experiential Education, Leuven University, Belgium.

The findings of the research study, along with insights from locally based practitioner research in childcare, preschool and school settings, contributed to the development of the self paced *REFLECT RESPECT RELATE* resource package. The resource is designed for educators with responsibility for the learning and development of children from birth to age 8, although its use is not restricted to this age group.

Attention has been given to the specificity of early childhood learning, cultural considerations and specific interest groups through wide ranging feedback.

REFLECT RESPECT RELATE is built around the following key premises

Relationships <i>Key premise</i>	Active Learning Environment <i>Key premise</i>	Wellbeing <i>Key premise</i>	Involvement <i>Key premise</i>
The relationships we build and the style of our interactions with young children are critical to their present and future wellbeing, to their learning, their development and their social competence. Children learn about themselves and their worlds with others, through relationships and experiences.	In an active learning environment, relationships are formed where reciprocal interactions and collaboration between educators and children lead to new understanding, knowledge and a deeper level of involvement. This requires educators to establish an environment and to be engaged with and create opportunities to extend children's understandings, skills and thinking across the breadth of children's learning & development.	A focus on wellbeing puts the onus on adults to make a judgement about the context rather than the child. It provides educators with immediate feedback about the effect of their approach and the environment and the opportunity to make adjustments. Without a strong sense of wellbeing children have difficulty maintaining their involvement. Within wellbeing optimism and agency arise giving children a sense of hope and confidence to have a go – and 'I can do it' feeling.	The level of children's involvement indicates how well the educational environment succeeds in meeting children's learning priorities. When children are involved they not only arrive at what they set out to do or an alternative destination, they voluntarily keep going and make further and more complex connections.

There is a correlation between this set of four integrated variables. The focus is on educators' engagement with children – emotional and intellectual

- wellbeing is essential for involvement
- involvement is essential for deep level learning
- wellbeing comes from relationships
- involvement is increased through an active learning environment
- an active learning environment strengthens relationships

Observation Scales overview

illustrating the domains and signals for observation of each of the four variables

<p>Relationships (based on the work of Doherty-Derkowski 1995)</p> <p>Observe children, note educators' interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ responsiveness ◦ positive interactions ◦ quality of verbal exchanges ◦ appropriateness 	<p>Active Learning Environment (adapted from Winter 2003)</p> <p>Observe educators</p> <p><i>constructivist pedagogy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ create an environment ◦ co-construct meaning ◦ reflect and plan <p><i>play</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ sensory-motor ◦ exploratory ◦ social ◦ pretend/symbolic <p><i>enabling learning dispositions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ curiosity ◦ communicability ◦ purposefulness/persistence ◦ openness/risk taking ◦ activity ◦ cooperation/collaboration ◦ reflection 	<p>Wellbeing (based on the work of Mayr & Ulich 1999; Laevers et al., 1997)</p> <p>Observe children</p> <p><i>happiness and satisfaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ confidence and self esteem ◦ sense of self ◦ vitality ◦ enjoyment/sense of humour ◦ ability to rest and relax <p><i>social functioning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ social initiative ◦ assertiveness ◦ coping/flexibility ◦ positive attitude towards warmth and closeness <p><i>dispositions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ openness and receptivity/pleasure in exploring ◦ pleasure in sensory experiences ◦ persistence/robustness 	<p>Involvement (Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children, Laevers ed. 1994)</p> <p>Observe children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ concentration ◦ energy ◦ complexity/creativity ◦ facial expression and posture ◦ persistence ◦ precision ◦ reaction time ◦ verbal utterances/language ◦ satisfaction
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THE REFLECT RESPECT RELATE RESOURCE can

- be used as a tool to observe the link between the quality of the learning environment (the responsibility of educators) and outcomes for children (their wellbeing and involvement in learning)
- support leaders to work with staff teams to gain insights into the overall quality of their setting and the resources to examine and define areas for improvement
- support inquiry as a way of educators working in the context of their settings, building on strengths and linking to local priorities and areas of interest
- challenge or validate practice – it can take courage to move beyond 'looking good' to critically examining practice
- provide immediate feedback about the quality of a setting – changes in practice can be readily assessed for effectiveness
- promote children's right to worthwhile, engaging and challenging experiences
- foreground how it is to be a child in a particular environment
- help to see children with 'new eyes' and take into account the 'emotional' and the 'cognitive'
- Indicate who takes advantage of our efforts and who does not
- provide a holistic view – avoid getting caught in the detail of 'context free' checklists and isolated skills
- provide a snapshot in time – not about passing or failing
- support a focus on foundational priorities and avoid being too formal too soon
- be inclusive of children's varied cultural and language experiences
- guide the use of shared language, decision making and coherence across sectors and groups
- support professional conversation about curriculum quality, practices and outcomes for children
- sit alongside any curriculum model or program – it is not curriculum content but can contribute to the critiquing of particular models, programs or approaches
- act as a starting point for inquiry – using the scales raises questions for further investigation
- be used formally and informally
- support data collection and use – both quantitative and qualitative – respecting both children's learning and educator pedagogy
- serve as a basis for planning, monitoring and reporting whole site progress
- support a strengths and rights based pedagogical approach to educators' work.

REFLECT RESPECT RELATE is not designed to

- **score individual children's wellbeing or involvement** – assigning children an individual rating is not consistent with the intent of the scales. Rating an individual child's wellbeing or involvement in a snapshot can be unreliable. In the learning environment, wellbeing and involvement are not viewed as characteristics of a child, but rather a response to the pedagogical and relational environments. Recognition is given to fluctuation in wellbeing and involvement influenced by many factors including the relationships and environment that children experience. There is no 'correct' score. However, each scale provides an indication of how supportive (or not) the environment is for learning.
- **score an individual educator's practice** – observations provide a snapshot in time and can contribute to self and group reflection and professional growth
- **measure children's abilities** – the focus is the involvement and wellbeing of children while they are in our settings
- **be used as a checklist of things to be taught or covered** – although it can help identify possible areas of interest/lack of interest, challenge, frustration, etc for consideration
- **be used as a checklist for reporting purposes** – for an individual child or educator. However, the domains/signals of the active learning and relationships scales can indicate areas of strengths in practices.