Review and update of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF): Background paper

Purpose

This paper provides an overview of the rationale and process for the update of the VEYLDF.

The implementation of the VEYLDF in 2010 has required and produced significant change in practice for many early childhood professionals. It is the first time that all early childhood professionals have been brought together across the early years, with a common framework to advance children’s learning and development.

It is now timely to initiate a review process to update the VEYLDF. The five Learning and Development Outcomes will not change. They are nationally agreed outcomes for all children from birth to five years.

However, the revised document will take into account emerging evidence, new policy directions and accountabilities. This will include an outline of supporting documents and additional material for early childhood professionals.

Consultation with early childhood experts and groups of early years professionals will ensure that the review process is robust, and that modifications reflect implementation progress within the early years sector.

Background

In July 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a National Early Childhood Development Strategy, *Investing in the Early Years,* to guide investment in future reforms.

The VEYLDF was released in November 2009 for implementation from 2010.

The VEYLDF aligns with *Being, Belonging and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF; 2009)**,** links to the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum in the early years of schooling, and *My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* (August 2011).

The Victorian framework builds on the national EYLF and extends its Principles, Practice and Learning Outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of children and young people who attend school-age care settings.

These frameworks provide a foundation for a range of educators across the early years. They are companion documents that complement each other and can be aligned with the same five Learning and Development Outcomes for children:

* 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.

These outcomes provide a shared language for all early childhood professionals in the early years across health, development and education. This includes the following services: maternal and child health, family day care, occasional care, early childhood intervention, family support services, playgroups, long day care, kindergarten programs, the early years of school and cultural organisations.

The VEYLDF Practice Principles for Learning and Development describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals (working with children from birth to eight years) to work together with children and with families to support a continuum of learning. The VEYLDF underpins the importance of supporting the transitions of children and families as they move within and across services and into school throughout the early years period.The practice principles are based on international evidence about the best ways to support children’s learning and are integrated with the Principles of Teaching and Learning Foundation–12 in schools.

The introduction of the Victorian Curriculum has provided new opportunities to forge effective curriculum links from the integrated approach to children’s learning prior to school. The five Learning and Development Outcomes have been mapped to the content of the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum in Mathematics, English, Science and History at Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2. In light of the intended release of the second iteration of the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum, further joint work will be undertaken to ensure alignment.

This illustrative mapping is designed to support continuity of learning for children by providing specific links between curriculum content from the VEYLDF to the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum. These illustrative links have been developed as an online resource on the VCAA website and form an amendment to the VEYLDF 2009 document.

Managing change in a complex environment

The Griffith University evaluation of implementation from 2010–12 provided an Educational Change Model (ECM) for the early years. The ECM outlines three phases of change in programs of reform from Initiation (1-2 years), Development (2–5 years) and Consolidation (5–10 years).

The ECM has informed a strategic approach to all VCAA and DET implementation directions with practitioners, policymakers and researchers. Within a reform cycle of 10 years, VEYLDF implementation is currently at a mid-point between Development and Consolidation phases.

Project Parameters and Terms of Reference

The ECM Development and Consolidation phases signal a point in time to deepen, refresh and renew the VEYLDF to reflect the work that has been done and to reference new evidence-based research and accountabilities that have emerged over the last five years.

The VEYLDF review and update is managed by VCAA Early Years Unit with DET as part of the ongoing VEYLDF implementation partnership arrangements.

1. Consultation approach

The consultation process for the review and edit will include:

* face-to-face consultation with stakeholders across Victoria and communication through online forums and an online and hard copy survey
* development of a multidisciplinary early years Practitioner Advisory Group to inform the review and update process
* reference to the outcomes of DET 2015 Transition to School Initiative consultations to support the revised VEYLDF
* revision of VEYLDF document branding including all images and logos and identification of new visuals.

2. Consultation discussions

* The consultation process will be guided by a set of key questions about key topics in the VEYLDF. The questions reflect new early childhood evidence and policy directions that have emerged over the last five years in relation to the Practice Principles, the Learning and Development Outcomes and design features.

3. Topics to be addressed in consultations

* The consultations will be approximately 75 minutes in length. It is envisaged that two Practice Principles and two Learning and Development Outcomes will be selected to focus discussion.

4. Outline of consultation questions

* What are some key practice findings that have emerged over the past five years that you believe should be included in an updated VEYLDF?
* How might the Practice Principle Integrated teaching and learning approaches be strengthened to influence deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful decisions and active engagement with children in every day environments?
* How might the Practice Principle ‘Assessment for learning and development’ be strengthened to inform:
* progress in children’s learning and development (birth to eight years)
* analysis of evidence of learning with children, families and other professionals
* timely referral and additional support?
* Identify a third Practice Principle for review.
* In relation to the Outcomes, does the information included in the five Learning and Development Outcomes provide sufficient guidance for your practice? If not, how could they be strengthened?
* What supporting documents would be helpful now to strengthen your understanding of the Learning and Development Outcomes?
* How could the mapping of the VEYLDF Learning and Development Outcomes to the Foundation-10 curriculum be strengthened to advance continuity of learning across early childhood services and schools?
* In what ways can information about the critical learning in the birth-to-three-years period be strengthened in the VEYLDF document?
* The format for the revised VEYLDF: When you look at the document overall, how can the layout be improved (for example, images, logos and figures)?

1. VEYLDF review and update timelines

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| 2015  May–Jul: Planning Phase   * Developed and existing advisory groups briefed * Development of multidisciplinary early years Practitioner Advisory Group to inform the review and update   Aug–Sep: Consultations Tue 18 Aug– Thu 17 Sep   * Engagement with stakeholders across Victoria (including use of Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership video-conference connections in venues across Victoria) * Consultation through online forums, including an online survey * Face-to-face consultations with early years practitioners, including completion of a brief VEYLDF review survey   Sep–Nov: Drafting   * Revision and redevelopment of the look and feel of the VEYLDF document, including Transition to School Initiative additions and images and logos.   2016  Feb: Approval of draft   * Approval is sought from the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood   Mar: Consultations   * Information sessions with stakeholders outlining the updated document * Communication through online forums and bulletins to outline the modifications to the VEYLDF   Jun: Final approval   * Final approval from the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood.   Jul: Publication   * Revised VEYLDF printed and distributed to early years sector |

2. VEYLDF sections for revision

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| Visual Images  The review and update will include revision of existing images and logos and identification of new visuals to best reflect new policy directions, contemporary research evidence and multidisciplinary practitioner engagement.  VEYLDF sections identified for updating now to reflect changes in government policies and evaluation of implementation (2010–2014):   * Review of the vision and purpose (p. 5–8) * Update material relating to the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and as part of references in Appendix 4 (p. 47-48) * Update references to the development of a series of Implementation Guides p. 8. Since 2009, these guides have been released in the form of Evidence Papers, Practice Principle Guides, Resource Booklets, and the Early Years Exchange editions 1–14 online publications * Review and update the Practice Principles for Learning and Development to reflect policy changes and advances in practice and analysis of practice (p. 9–14) * Review and update the introductions and detail for each of the five Learning and Development Outcomes (p. 18–29) * Revise links to the Outcomes from the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), now the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum (p. 17–31). Updated illustrative links to the first four subjects in the school curriculum: English, Mathematics, History and Science have been completed and are available on the VCAA website (from 2012). To be updated in connection with the review of the Australia Curriculum and the school curriculum achievement standards, content descriptors and general capabilities * Update concluding statement in relation to policy and research developments (p. 37) * Update the Appendix sections (p. 38–49) |