



The 3 exceeding themes of the NQS in Practice and Theory

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Introduction

- In February 2018 the NQS were updated.
- This update included 3 new exceeding themes against which all services will be assessed.
- The exceeding themes form a part of every standard.
- The exceeding themes are made up of 'indicators' which 'may' be considered as a part of an exceeding rating.

Documenting your exceeding strengths and improvements

- In addition to documenting your practices that meet the standards in your QIP, introduce new areas to your QIP to document your strengths and key improvements for the exceeding areas.
- This allows you to document your exceeding practices, be aware of your progress and share your progress and goals with your assessor.

Add exceeding themes to strengths

Information for families 1.3.3	<p>Families are encouraged in a variety of ways to connect with our centre in a variety of ways including attending meetings to help, correspondence to pick up and drop off, meetings, emails to the centre, via Storypark and phone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families are encouraged to participate in attending committee meetings and are advised of when the next meeting is held at the centre.• Documentation is displayed in a variety of ways for families to access these include but are not limited to online programme, daily curriculum printed out and displayed within the rooms, children's portfolios, phone calls, centre emails and signage.• Educator's value families input into the program about their child's development and utilise this information to extend on children's learning.• Families can directly email their child's room and educators are able to respond directly to the email.• Educational leader regularly communicates with our families through newsletters and via email. The EL ensures that families are aware that she is available for parent meetings if they wish to discuss anything with her about the educational programme at our centre.
Strengths Exceeding Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operation	

Add exceeding themes to key improvements

Key improvements sought for Quality Area 2

Improvement Plan

Standard/ element	Identified Issue	What outcome or goal do we seek?	Priority (L/M/H)	How will we get this outcome? (Steps)	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
2.1.2							
2.2							
Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operation							
Exceeding theme 2: practice is informed by critical reflection							
Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and community							



Exceeding Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operation



- At the Exceeding level for any standard, high quality practice is demonstrated consistently and frequently across the service. It is interwoven through all aspects of the program and is visible, directly or indirectly, in many forms. (NQS pg. 331)

- At the Exceeding level, educators demonstrate a deep understanding of pedagogy. This leads to exemplary practice such as embedding high quality practice throughout service provisions, underpinning all practice with critical reflection and creating contextually appropriate practice for the service community.
- When educators demonstrate this they are able to link their practice with the National Quality Standards and the reasons behind this approach, in particular how it connects to the service philosophy and broader vision for quality.
- Fundamentally, educators understand the themes of exceeding for high quality practice and for the purpose of improving learning and development outcomes for children.

Approaches for embedding practice

Different approaches to embedding Indigenous perspectives in practice

Approach	Examples of practice
Practical	Inclusion of puzzles, posters, books, dolls, artwork and images representing Indigenous peoples and cultures Atypical curriculum activities such as painting boomerangs and didgeridoos, dot paintings and outdoor cultural games
Symbolic	Display of an Aboriginal flag and Torres Strait Islander flag in the reception area <i>Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners</i> spoken as part of the curriculum and at key events Map of Aboriginal Australia on display and used within curriculum activities
Substantive	The development of working relationships with Indigenous people and organisations in the local community Procedures that invite the participation of Indigenous people in decision-making processes Remuneration offered for the expertise of Indigenous people The development of a workforce strategy to employ Indigenous child care professionals within the service

Miller, M. (2011). Embedding Indigenous perspectives in the early childhood curriculum. Vol 17, No 2, 2011 *Educating Young Children - Learning and teaching in the early childhood years*

Examples of exceeding theme 1 in practice

- ALL educators being CONSISTANTLY attuned to ALL the childrens needs throughout the day, and ALL educators are aware of how this links to the service philosophy, theories, the standards, health recommendations and the code of ethics. (QA2)
- Practice in the centre obviously, at all times, reflects the services philosophy and chosen theorists. (QA1)
- All staff display a high level of commitment to collaboration and support each other to further develop their knowledge, understanding and training. (this may look like every educator attending PD several times a year and speaking passionately about what they have learned and excited to learn more) (QA4)
- When a practice is embedded, you see the children and educators are confident and skilled at that practice. There are no unsure-ities. Children feel secure and can self-regulate. (QA5)



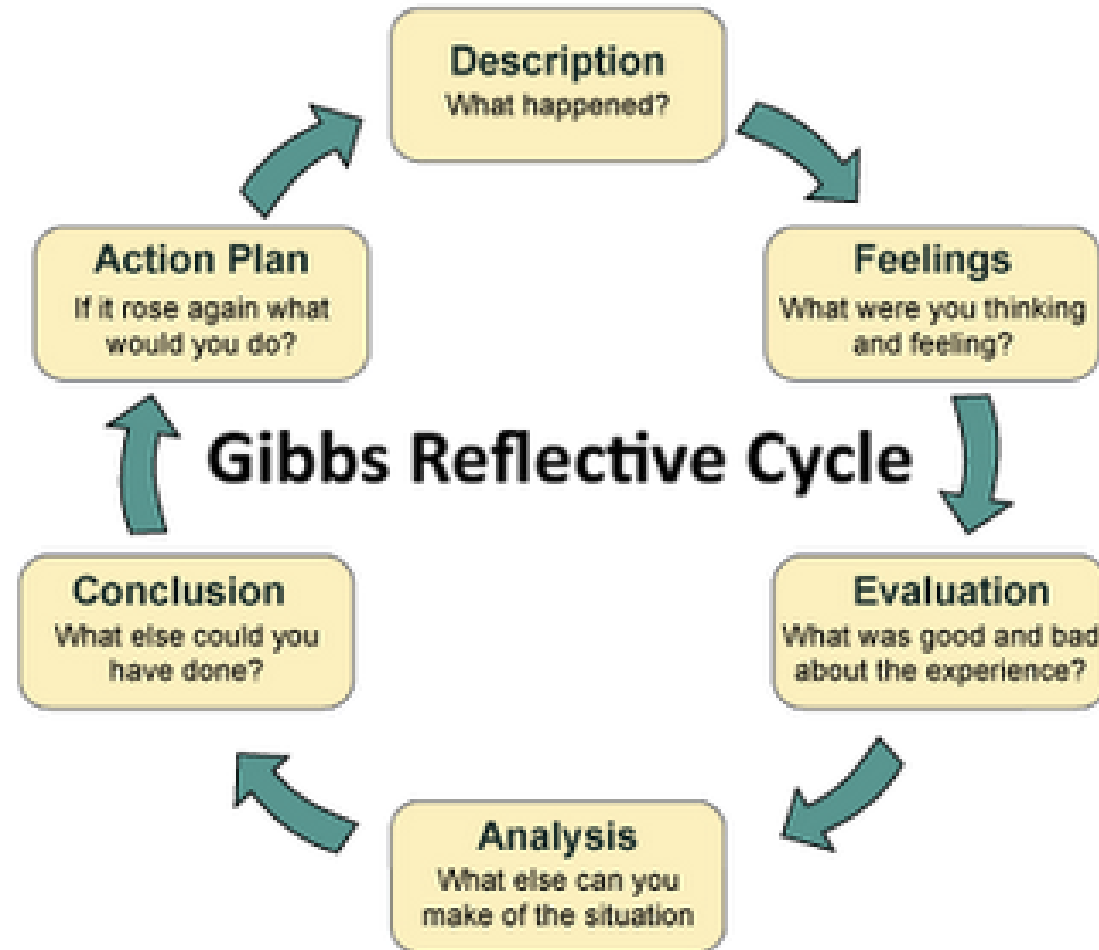
Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection



From the NQS:

- “Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives, with a focus on implications for equity, inclusion and diversity. It takes reflective practice to a deeper level and includes educators analysing or diagnosing what happened and why. For example:
 - why educators may have responded in the way they did
 - how educators felt
 - why educators made certain decisions
 - what may have influenced educators’ actions
 - which theoretical perspectives educators draw on in their decision-making (whether deliberately or subconsciously).” Page 133

Gibbs reflective cycle



Johns' Model for Structured Reflection (2006)

Looking in

- Find a space to focus on self
- Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions
- Write down those thoughts and emotions that seem significant in realising desirable work.

Looking out

- Write a description of the situation surrounding your thoughts and feelings.
- What issues seem significant?
- Aesthetics

What was I trying to achieve?

Why did I respond as I did?

What were the consequences of that for the patient/others/myself?

How were others feeling?

How did I know this?

- Personal

Why did I feel the way I did within this situation?

- Ethics

Did I act for the best? (ethical mapping)

- What factors (either embodied within me or embedded within the environment) were influencing me?

- Empirics

What knowledge did or could have informed me?

- Reflexivity

Does this situation connect with previous experiences?

How could I handle this situation better?

What would be the consequences of alternative actions for the patient/others/myself?

How do I *now* feel about this experience?

Can I support myself and others better as a consequence?

How available am I to work with patients/families and staff to help them meet their needs?

Gibbs and Johns models

- **Good for:** Organisational model, examines situations in context of the environment. Provides prompt questions that are easy to follow, and can be used in any order (although they follow a natural progression). Can be used by individuals or groups. Based on Carper's (1978) four types of knowing -empirical, personal, ethical and aesthetic- Johns adds a fifth one – reflexivity- to create his model.
- **Uses in Early Childhood:** Can be linked to the code of ethics and theory easily. Can consider the perspectives of others. Good for critical incidents, accidents, staff disagreements, family complaints. Also could be used for reflecting on practise.
- **Criticisms are:** The prompt questions aren't rigidly structured which could be confusing for someone inexperienced to know which ones could be omitted and which are salient for their particular reflection. The amount of questions means it could be time consuming.
- **Links to standards:** [links to page 133 on critical reflection](#)
- Throughout the standards there are questions for reflection that are recommended for reflection on practices.

Schön model (1991)

Reflection in action
(at the time the event is happening)

- The experience itself
- Thinking about it during the event
- Deciding how to act at the time
- Acting immediately

Reflection on action
(after the event)

- Reflecting on something that has happened
- Thinking about what you might do differently if it happened again
- New information gained and/or theoretical perspectives from study that inform the reflector's experience are used to process feelings and actions

- **Good for:** Schön described **reflection-in-action** (in the moment surprise & puzzlement) and **reflection-on-action** (a cognitive post-mortem after the fact). Professional model: gaining professional artistry and increasing professional confidence.
- **Uses in Early Childhood:** educators can reflect on the go as they are working with the children. Reflection on action is visible in pedagogical documentation. This is what we see in our programming cycles.
- **Criticisms are:** highlights the difference between the two types of reflection but does not provide extensive guidance for carrying out either.
- **Links to the Standards:** Pg 134
- “reflecting-in-action by changing or altering experiences which are not engaging children” pg 134

Perspectives to consider in reflection

- Individual educators/ staff
- Room groups/ room leaders
- Educational leader
- Director
- Management
- Families
- Children
- Community
- Theory and current research

2.1 exceeding theme 2:

Example of critical reflection plan

Indicator	What this may look like in Practice/ evidence	Perspectives considered	When/ how where does critical reflection take place? (critical reflection model and depth 1.2.3)	Where/ how is this actioned and success measured?	Dates updated in the QIP
Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators systematically and regularly reflect on opportunities to enhance each child's health outcomes and promote physical activity with children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have children's health outcomes as a consistent item agenda for monthly staff meetings (recorded from parent notes, conversations and written records, community information) share with parents - When critically reflecting on the program for the day/ week/ fortnight, have a reflective tool to focus on how the program addressed childrens health and physical activity and feedback form children and families - Have a dedicated part of the program allocated to physical activity and regularly reflect on how many children participate. Get children and family feedback - Have brochures/ books available to children and families on the importance of physical activity and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle. Discuss and share ideas with family and community. Ensure these are up to date. - Create a daily fun monitor for children to rate their time in the service they were physically active, and how much they enjoyed it (SAC) - The service has a record of the AEDC for their area and knows areas of priority for the health and development of the children in their local area. This is shared with families and community 	<p>Educators</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Community/ govt</p> <p>Educators</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Director</p> <p>Management</p> <p>Educators</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Educators</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Govt</p> <p>Community</p>	<p>Staff meeting</p> <p>Meeting minutes</p> <p>Conversations and written correspondence with families</p> <p>Childrens floorbook</p> <p>Daily verbal childrens feedback</p> <p>Written pedagogical documentation</p> <p>Educational leaders notes/ records</p> <p>Program</p> <p>Families and childrens written and verbal feedback</p> <p>Record of current health information and record of checking it is current</p> <p>PD records updated regularly</p> <p>Recorded in book</p> <p>Reflect on AEDC. Record strategies for implementation. Follow up and reflect and continually action and review</p>	-	-

Levels of depth of reflection

- **Superficial (= descriptive reflection) non-reflectors**
- Reflection at this level is very basic – some would say it is not reflection at all, as it is largely descriptive! However the description should not just be of what happened but should include a description of why those things happened.
- Reflection at a superficial level makes reference to an existing knowledge base, including differing theories but does not make any comment or critique of them.

- **Medium (= dialogic reflection) reflectors**
- At this level of reflection, the person takes a step back from what has happened and starts to explore thoughts, feelings, assumptions and gaps in knowledge as part of the problem solving process.
- The reflector makes sense of what has been learnt from the experience and what future action might need to take place.

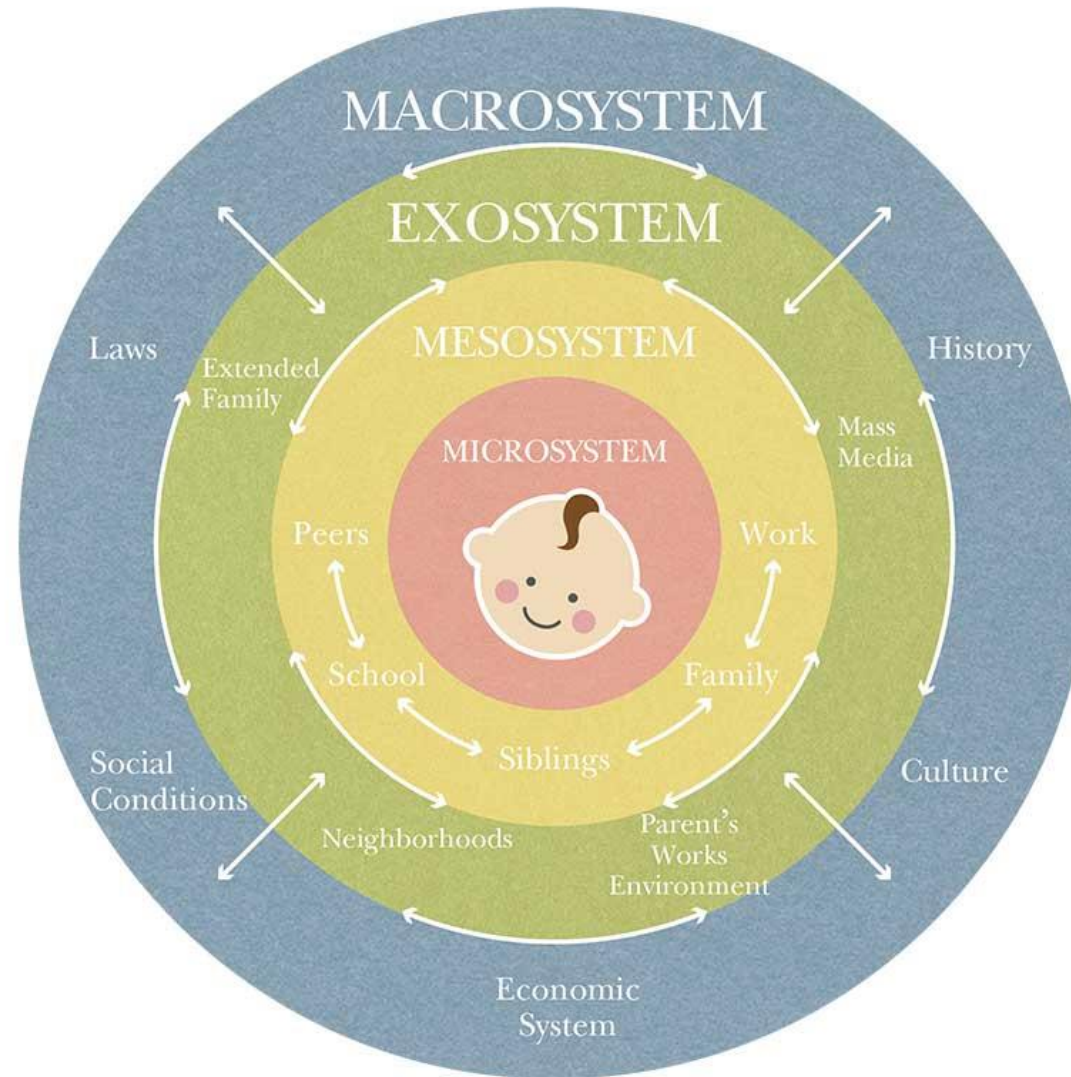
- **Deep (= critical reflection) critical reflectors**
- This level of reflection has the most depth. This level of reflection shows that the experience has created a change in the person – his/her views of self, relationships, community of practice, society and so on. To do so, the writer needs to be aware of the relevance of multiple perspectives from contexts beyond the chosen incident – and how the learning from the chosen incident will impact on other situations.



Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System



Epstein's model for family and community involvement

- **Parenting.** Assist families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.
- **'Communicating.** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Create two-way communication channels between school and home.
- **Volunteering.** Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school.
- **Learning at Home.** Involve families with their children in playing and learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities. Encourage teachers to design home activities that enables children to share and discuss interesting tasks.
- **Decision-Making.** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.
- **Collaborating with the Community.** Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community.
- Taken from School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action (2nd edition), Joyce L. Epstein, M.G. Sanders, B.S. Simon, K.C. Salinas, N.R. Jansorn, and F.L. Voorhis, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2002.

Examples of exceeding theme 3 in practice

- A centre with indigenous students built a sense of belonging for these children and families. The parent provided information on their local culture and activities, with the families, the centre developed an acknowledgment to country for all mat sessions, sourced dreamtime music and stories and games. Local elders were sourced for dancing with the children and teaching children about the indigenous plants in the centres garden and the plants uses. This has all become regular practice. The family is happy and has reflected on the services involvement. (QA6)
- Families are provided several means for feedback to suit their work place/ culture/ lifestyle: facebook, email, letter, surveys, verbally, through website, programming app, individual meetings, whole open parent meetings, communication books, room diaries, parent pockets, interpreters and advice is sought and recorded from parents around their areas of expertise for policy development and practice. (QA7)

Using educators strengths to drive the process

- The exceeding themes may lead to new responsibilities for educators...
- A Social Justice and Equity Champion?
- A Family and Community Engagement Champion?
- These roles could regularly and systematically look across all 7 QAs to reflect on and plan future actions for inclusion and engagement. Delegating some responsibility for the exceeding themes through the centre to passionate educators.

Managers and directors of services need to be committed to research, staying current with literature and professional development to lead the team in the exceeding themes.

- The exceeding themes function at a higher level of practice, that requires additional research and knowledge to what has been required previously.
- This raises the quality of care and education for all children as we search for and develop new ways to improve practice. This will be an ongoing process that all services need to embrace to be the best they can be for children.



Thank you !

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