Planning within an emergent curriculum approach emphasises the importance of collaborating with children to create learning experiences that are responsive to children’s interests, needs and strengths.

What is planning?

Planning for learning takes many forms. The approaches and formats used for planning reflect the beliefs that teachers hold about children’s learning and development, their pedagogical practices and interests.

Planning is a system for recording teachers’ ideas and thoughts about:

- what teachers believe children need to learn
- teachers’ perceptions of children’s interests
- the resources and materials needed to support the learning
- interactions teachers share with children to support learning
- making connections with family and community priorities.

Teachers’ planning is informed by their observation and assessment of children’s learning, strengths, interests, needs and capabilities. It also includes information gathered from parents and children, which helps teachers to build increasing knowledge of each child to inform future planning.

Planning within an emergent curriculum

Teacher’s role in emergent curriculum

The teacher’s role in planning within an emergent curriculum involves:

- flexibility in teacher thinking, organisation and focus for learning
- creating a balance between children’s current interests, needs, dispositions and skills and teacher-led experiences based on professional curriculum content knowledge
- focusing on the present and considering what children need to be successful learners in the future
- making decisions about which aspects of learning and development to focus on for a particular child or group of children
- engaging collaboratively with children, their ideas and interests
- establishing strong and trusting relationships with families, carers and communities to ensure that their priorities and interests are reflected in planning documentation and interactions
- integrating short-term, long-term and on-the-spot planning
- working from a strengths-based perspective that views children as competent and capable learners.
It is important for teachers to selectively document key decisions using chosen planning formats. Regular and systematic documentation combines planned teacher-initiated ideas, children’s ideas and the post-planning that occurs retrospectively when following up emerging interests.

Children’s role in emergent curriculum

Within an emergent curriculum, children contribute actively to planning and organising for learning when:

- they negotiate ways to follow emerging interests and ideas
- their intentions are understood and embraced
- they reflect on play and learning with an adult
- they choose ways to respond to ideas, objects and questions purposefully introduced by the teacher.

Why is it important to integrate short- and long-term planning?

The documentation of planning (e.g. the chosen planning format) may be quite individual, reflecting ongoing changes in teachers’ thinking and practice. However, it usually combines elements of short- and long-term planning that include planned and emergent experiences, and a focus on individuals, small groups and the whole group. Planning may also be documented retrospectively, based on a teacher’s daily observations and experiences with children.

Long-term planning

Long-term planning (e.g. for a month, term or year) provides a framework that helps teachers to:

- ensure they are focusing on the five areas of learning and development described in the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline
- create a balance between opportunities for children to benefit from child-selected play experiences, collaboratively developed projects and planned teacher-led experiences
- establish a balance between indoor and outdoor learning experiences; quiet spaces and experiences; and small and large group ‘community’ learning opportunities. Providing this balance helps teachers to ensure that children have long periods of time to engage in deep learning.

Short-term planning

Attention to ‘big picture’ long-term planning helps teachers to focus the direction of short-term planning, e.g. for a week or day. Short-term planning involves the organisation of the kindergarten setting, and routines and experiences children may engage with on a day-to-day basis. This planning draws on teachers’ observations at the end of the day or from the previous day/week. However, this planning is also flexible and responsive to emerging and changing situations. This ensures that short-term planning focuses on children’s specific, emerging needs and interests and the resources and interactions that will best support their current learning.

Short-term planning may outline details of intentional teaching and plans to extend children’s ideas and interests, including:

- planning the location and accessibility of resources, e.g. placement of materials to ensure easy and independent access by children
• organisation of the learning space, e.g. providing a balance of quiet and active play spaces, spaces for group and individual learning

• establishing daily routines and transitions, including plenty of time for smooth, unhurried arrivals and settling in; transitions throughout the day; quiet and active times, indoor and outdoor learning opportunities; mealtimes and regular group experiences, such as stories, investigations and music and movement experiences.

• planning for observation and assessment of individual children’s learning progress

• planning interactions, questions and challenges to extend learning.

**Why should I document my planning?**

Documenting planning is an important part of teachers’ decision-making process. As teachers write their plans, the documentation process can help to:

• clarify their thinking about children’s learning

• identify what learning needs further support, extension and exploration

• identify which children need additional scaffolding or time to engage in a specific aspect of learning

• plan opportunities for children to consolidate skills

• create a balanced, manageable and calm flow for the kindergarten day.

Documenting planning makes visible the learning experiences children are engaging in as part of the daily program to children, families and partners. It identifies the intentional teaching practices teachers plan to use in their interactions with children, assists teachers to meet accountability requirements, and provides a reference point for reflection and evaluation.

**Choosing a planning format**

There are many forms of planning documentation that teachers adapt to suit their personal preferences or the requirements of their service. The most-commonly used planning formats that teachers use include:

• a daily planning schedule

• a weekly program plan

• longer-term overviews

• butcher’s paper planning with children that links to the teacher’s own planning documents.

Teachers select planning formats that:

• effectively support ongoing decision making

• are easy to use, time efficient and avoid duplication

• help link daily planning for individuals and groups with planning over longer periods of time, e.g. by helping to identify gaps and ensuring all aspects of learning are promoted.

When teachers select planning formats that are documented in collaboration with children, this kind of planning usually holds a different communicative purpose. It is often displayed in the kindergarten room to help teachers share with children, parents and families what is happening, the kinds of questions children are asking, and where the focus for learning may lie. Some planning templates and samples are provided in the resource.
Planning with the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline

Short- and long-term planning with the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline helps to frame teachers’ thinking, to balance priorities, to identify potential gaps in the program and to focus on current and future learning possibilities.

When teachers plan they:

- Balance individual, small group and whole group learning.
- Work with partners.
- Use intentional teaching interactions.
- Organise the learning environment.
- Record learning possibilities, before interactions.
- Plan and negotiate learning with children, and record those plans.
- Draw on their observations of children to inform planning.

LONG-TERM PLANNING STEPS

Observations of children
What information has been gathered about children and how can this be incorporated into planning?

Knowledge of children’s prior learning
What knowledge have children shared and how will this be accommodated into planning to build on existing skills and interests?

Broad learning outcomes
How can the broad outcomes be incorporated into the program?

Learning and development areas
What possibilities are there for incorporating the key focuses and significant learning through children’s interests? What has emerged during play, and what may need to be introduced?

Ongoing conversations with parents and colleagues
What information needs to be shared with families, and how can the information they provide be incorporated into planning?

Family and community priorities
How can these be responded to through long- and short-term planning? Where can they be incorporated into programming and interactions?

SHORT-TERM PLANNING STEPS

Observations of children
What information has been recorded about children’s strengths, needs and interests?

Learning and development areas
How can a balance be established between the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for learning now and in the future? Which key focuses and significant learnings can be linked to long-term priorities and plans?

Balancing interests and learning outcomes
How can a balance be achieved through individual, small group and whole group experiences?

Events/topics that emerge
How can children’s interests be supported and extended?

Intentional teaching practices
What strategies can be used to support learning possibilities? Which intentional teaching examples in the learning and development areas can help to support current interests?

Local events
What possibilities are there to support learning outcomes through local events and who may be able assist?

When teachers reflect with children they:

- Record and share learning interactions, stories and documents retrospectively.
- Engage in ongoing observation of children.
- Reflect on learning and practice, and engage with partners.
- Evaluate the program, considering both long-term and short-term plans.
- Follow up with ongoing conversations with parents and colleagues.
Reflection questions

- What is the teacher’s role in planning and how does this fit with your image of the teacher?
- What is the child’s role in planning and how does this fit with your image of the child?
- What is the relationship between long- and short-term planning?
- How does the process of documenting plans contribute to intentional teaching practices?
  (See page 10 of the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline — Documenting planning.)