



# A FRAMEWORK FOR CONSTRUCTING MEANING

*Rationale for  
The Practice  
of Relationships:  
Essential Provisions for  
Children's Services*



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### Rationale for The Practice of Relationships: Essential Provisions for Children's Services

As an introduction to *The Practice of Relationships: Essential Provisions for Children's Services* this paper provides the reader with a contextual setting. It aims to provide background information and an overview of the Framework. It draws from significant developments in the early childhood literature as well as international and local practices which have influenced the development of this Curriculum Framework. In essence, the paper aims to provide background to support the reader in constructing meaning within the Curriculum Framework.

## BACKGROUND

### The project

The NSW Department of Community Services established the Office of Childcare (OCC) in 1998 with a mandate of offering "a fresh approach" to children's services. As part of its review of existing policies and development of new initiatives, it was considered timely and important to undertake the development of a curriculum framework in recognition of and in response to interest in new approaches and a number of other factors:

- NSW Government's commitment to valuing the early years;
- Increasing importance attributed to the early years by researchers and society;
- Recent brain research findings;
- The shift towards recognising diversity of pedagogies and new approaches to knowing about children;
- The importance of valuing staff in their efforts to engage in innovative and thoughtful new pedagogical approaches.

Consequently, in 1999 the project commenced, with Associate Professor Anne Stonehouse as the consultant working closely with the Office of Child Care to produce the Framework. The project included the following components:

- Survey of relevant literature
- Close collaboration with a broadly composed Steering Committee, representing the community and private sectors, early childhood organisations and representatives from other Government Departments and the NSW Board of Studies.

- Face-to-face consultation with a number of experts on curriculum and dimensions of the Framework.
- Face-to-face consultation with individuals and groups with specialist interest and expertise (including Montessori and Steiner approaches to children's services, children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, children with disabilities, the early years of school, literacy and numeracy.)
- Extensive circulation of an initial questionnaire, initial principles and two drafts of the document to practitioners with a request for feedback.
- Consultation sessions held in 33 locations all over the state, with over 1300 people participating.
- Consideration of nearly 200 written submissions representing responses from individuals, services and organisations.
- A pilot project, using a late draft of the document, which ran for approximately six months involving 16 services (including preschools, family day care, mobiles, and a multi-functions Aboriginal children's service) selected by the Office of Childcare to represent a range of private and community sector children's service located in a variety of urban, rural and remote areas of NSW.
- Comprehensive evaluation of the pilot project, and presentation of the findings to the Steering Committee for consideration.
- Final revision of the document based on the recommendations from the pilot project and the Steering Committee.

The completed Framework reflects thoughtful appraisal and development as a result of this widened perspective gained from the NSW early childhood field together with ongoing dialogue over

the course of the project with members of the NSW Curriculum Framework Steering Committee.

The aim of the *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services Project – The Practice of Relationships* was not to diminish or supplant the many effective practices across early childhood settings in New South Wales. Rather, it aimed firstly to affirm and validate existing good practices, and secondly to draw from and extend practices fuelled by new evidence gleaned from international and national early childhood curriculum developments and research as well as the collective wisdom of practitioners in the New South Wales early childhood field.

Specifically the project sought to:

- Validate and document the excellent practice that already exists in the field;
- Clarify the common elements of good practice that exist across all program types, and those that are unique to particular types of programs; and
- Provide an endorsed framework that is a strong framework about the importance of the early years, the types of experiences that support children's learning and development appropriately, and consequently, the importance of early childhood programs.

The Curriculum Framework will not be mandated. It is a substantive professional development initiative for those professionals and services electing to use the Framework. It offers a powerful professional tool. With accompanying resources and training, it presents practitioners with an opportunity to reconsider and to refine their practices while being supported in their efforts to make a real difference in the lives of young children and their families. It complements and goes beyond regulations and quality assurance systems in place for services.

## Context

Current curriculum practices in children's services in New South Wales cannot be linked with one dominant curriculum model as diversity of pedagogy has always been a feature of early childhood education. In recognition of the diversity of approaches adopted, acknowledgement must be given to a range of models and movements internationally and locally which have shaped current thinking and early childhood practices: Bank Street, High/Scope, Steiner, Montessori, DISTAR, Reggio Emilia, *Te Whariki*, the Antibias Curriculum. In the past few years, there has been discernible influence from and strong local interest in a number of approaches documented in the international and Australian literature, with a particular focus on the United States, Italy and New Zealand. Interest has also been evident within Australia on state early childhood curricular developments in South Australia (*Foundation Areas of Learning*), Queensland (*Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*) as well as work in progress in Tasmania (*Review of Early Childhood*).

- **NSW Government commitment to valuing the early years**

The NSW Government demonstrates a strong commitment to the importance of the early years. There has been recent endorsement by Cabinet of the Early Childhood Services Policy revealing a significant shift in policy direction in relation to government's involvement in service provision. Service provision is now defined in terms of the child in the context of their families and communities. A clear role for State Government is articulated in the regulating, monitoring and funding of a wide range of services for families with young children through the Office of Childcare.

The promotion of quality early childhood programs is a core feature of the State Government policy to support children in the context of their families and communities. This is accompanied by further commitment to develop and distribute resources to support good quality practices in children's services. The Curriculum Framework for Children's Services project emerged from this commitment and is a major operational aspect of the new early childhood policy for New South Wales, incorporating key values of the policy.

A major NSW Government initiative, *Families First*, also clearly demonstrates this focus of valuing the early years. *Families First* was established in 1999 as a co-ordinated strategy to increase the effectiveness of early intervention and prevention services in helping and supporting families with their parenting roles. Additionally, the provision of considerable budgetary allocations to conduct research and to develop resource materials supporting the development of good quality early childhood programs is evidence of a genuine commitment.

- **Increasing importance attributed to the early years**

The blending of neuroscience and developmental psychology evidence has reinforced and supported a long held view of early childhood professionals about the importance of the early years. The presence of additional "hard" evidence from neuroscience has assisted society, and politicians in particular, to attribute increasing importance to this period (Lally, 1998; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Newberger, 1997; Shore, 1997; Talay-Ongan, 2000; Wolfe & Brandt, 1998). Evidence is compelling in public policy and social capital terms to allocate priority to this area as part of a positive strategy to

support children, families and society (Young, 1996). In economic terms, investing in the early years is now considered an effective strategy with long term economic benefits to society. It has been widely reported from American studies that for every \$US1,000 spent in early childhood education, at least \$US7,160 is returned to society in reduction of crime, the need for special education, income support and unemployment savings in addition to other positive outcomes such as higher school retention rates and higher motivation and success in entering the workforce (OECD, 1998).

Recognition of the importance of the early years is two fold: the early years are respected as a vital period with its own inherent worth as well as an important foundation time for future learning and development. Both emphases are soundly endorsed in a recent draft discussion paper of state and national significance. This paper is commissioned through the Ministerial Council for Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) who asked the Council of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers (CESCEO) to establish an Early Childhood Education Working Party. This working party proposes national goals reflective of these dual emphases for early childhood:

- *Promote high quality early childhood experiences for all Australian children in all early childhood settings*
- *Build solid foundations for learning literacy, numeracy and social skills*
- *Maximise life opportunities for children in their families and communities.*

(CESCEO, 2000, 21 Draft Discussion Paper)

Early childhood is recognised as a unique stage in the human life cycle. As such there is a need to acknowledge the unique learning and development opportunities that occur at this time

and ensure that children in this period are exposed to appropriate life enhancing experiences that are “educational” in the broadest possible sense (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Rebecca New (1999, 265) refers to this period as a time of “precious opportunity and vulnerability”, capturing a sense of both the potential and the fragility of the stage.

Core values which have been associated historically with the early childhood profession and young children's programs emphasise the importance of the early years and highly regarded modes of operating.

These include:

- *Recognition of the early childhood period as a unique stage in the life cycle and therefore the valuing of lives in their own right in this stage and not just as preparation for later stages;*
- *A developmental approach to work in fostering learning and development;*
- *Respect for the closeness of the child and parents;*
- *Respect for the child developing best in context of family, culture and society;*
- *Respect for each child as an individual.*

(Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, 7)

Advocacy for all children from birth to eight years of age must include vigorous promotion of the need for quality experiences at home and in children's services during this period to lead to quality outcomes for the child, the family and the community in the short and long term. This is particularly important to improve the lives of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research indicates that these children are most advantaged from good quality experiences in children's services (Barnett, 1995; Barnett, 1998) but they are also likely to be negatively affected

by any combination of poor quality experiences at home and in children's programs (Smith, Grima, Gaffney & Powell, 1999). There is now a widely held view in the community that all children should benefit from access to good quality early childhood services prior to formal schooling. Thus children's services are confronted with a range of access and equity issues to ensure children from all backgrounds and particularly children from disadvantaged backgrounds, have ample opportunities to benefit.

Providing quality experiences in the early years will provide worthwhile learning and development opportunities now and a firm foundation for learning in later years (Boocock, 1995). The issue of continuity of learning assumes importance over this period. It is acknowledged that transitions are a feature in the lives of young children. (Christensen, 1998; Kagan, 1992). How smoothly a young child makes transitions between the home and children's service, between professionals within services, between multiple services, or later between services, home and the school becomes an important developmental consideration to aid continuity in learning and development. A key role of the early childhood professional is to assist young children to make successful transitions from one sector of their lives to another (Dockett, Perry & Howard, 2000; Galper, 1998; Sameroff & McDonough, 1994). Provision of good quality programs that are suited to the young child in terms of developing positive self concept, confidence, independence as well as a range of good foundation outcomes can no doubt assist. Moreover, the early childhood practices of building strong partnerships with families and co-ordinated approaches to enhance links across home, school and community are helpful aspects in fostering successful transitions (Seefeldt & Galper, 1998).

The absence of a co-ordinated approach in relation to linkages between children's services and schools

has sometimes proved an obstacle, limiting smooth transitions for children. At a structural level, professionals in children's services and those within schools may hold dissimilar views on what constitutes "school readiness" or even whether or not it is an appropriate concept. While both parties advocate in the best interests of the child and undoubtedly aspire to similar long term goals for the child, the experience for the child is less than ideal wherever agreement cannot be reached on the means towards such goals at school entrance time. In some local communities, concerted efforts are made by professionals in both sectors to address this continuity issue, but a need exists for better understanding of issues and clarity in expectations at a systems level for more widespread support for children's transitions to school. The Starting School Research Project at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur (Dockett, Perry & Howard, 2000) is expected to assist significantly in this development.

### • Brain research findings

Recent neuroscience research on brain development and associated media attention have underscored the significance of the critical early years of development, particularly from birth to three years of age (Newberger, 1997; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shore, 1997; Talay-Ongan, 2000; Wolfe & Brandt, 1998). While it is true that the young child will have continuing opportunities for learning in subsequent years, evidence points to particular sensitivity of this period for the development of brain pathways and propensity for learning. Therefore, there are profound implications for good quality standards in the environments and experiences for all young children regardless of setting.

The National Investment For The Early Years (NIFTeY) was established in 1999 as a national advocacy movement in recognition of the

importance of the first three years of life being foundationally important and to promote the need for all children to be provided with the best possible early life (Vimpani, 2000). NIFTeY is expected to influence public education about the substantial long-term benefits from society's acknowledgement and investment in the early years if Australia wishes to benefit from a highly competent population in the future. To translate this wish into reality early childhood services must contribute responsibly to young children's development along with families, communities, governments and employers.

- **Recognition of diversity of pedagogies and new approaches to knowing about children**

Early childhood practices have always had a somewhat dynamic nature, shifting over the years to reflect theories, research, developing trends and indeed the changing composition of Australian society. With its indigenous people and those from non English speaking backgrounds, Australia is one of the most diverse societies in the world. Policies of multiculturalism, initially introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 1980, recognised this diversity. Later this policy was supplemented by an Access and Equity policy and more recently, in 1997, by The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (Germanos-Kousounadis, 2000). These policies are reflected through State and Commonwealth funding conditions. Additionally, in the spirit of reconciliation with the indigenous people of Australia, it is widely recognised that their special needs and rights should be acknowledged and afforded special consideration.

Over a long period, leadership from peak and local organisations has supported early childhood professionals through advocacy, numerous professional development initiatives and resource development to work effectively in a more complex

and multicultural Australia. Since 1989, the theoretical framework of The Antibias Curriculum (Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Force, 1989) has added to this strong knowledge base and played an influential role in confronting attitudes and providing positive direction to the early childhood field. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory, also provides an important framework to support professionals in delivering respectful programs to all children.

Issues of democracy, equity and social justice are important cornerstones of *The Practice of Relationships*. Honouring and valuing diversity is promoted as a fundamental concern of every children's service, regardless of the composition of staff, children and families at the service at any one time. These are not only worthy values to be appreciated, acknowledged and spoken about but, more importantly, they should be enacted in daily living in the programs.

While it has always been important to ensure that children from identified special needs groups receive adequate resources appropriate to their needs, it is equally important to ensure that their human needs and commonalities with other children are respected. Principles of inclusive practice already followed by many services and supported by the Curriculum Framework, form a powerful basis for the promotion of strong, positive relationships for all persons in children's services (Mallory, 1998; New, 1998).

In recent years, there has been interest in emerging pedagogical approaches in other countries. The *Reggio Emilia* experience from Italy in particular has enthused many in the early childhood field world wide with its new ways of knowing about children and their potential (Gandini, 1997; New, 1992; 1999(a); 1999(b); Millikan, 1996; 1997). In Australia, there has been a strong thread of professional development activities dedicated to Reggio Emilia

enquiry and, in turn, reflected in current practice. Dialogue about reflecting and strengthening practice has flourished through local, regional, state and national discussion groups, conferences and overseas study tours.

Additionally, New Zealand's *Te Whariki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) has been followed with keen interest as an innovative example of an integrated curriculum framework for all children from birth to school age in a variety of services. The framework reflects the society's goals for young children... *to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society* (Te Whariki, 1996, 9). A notable strong point of the *Te Whariki* document is the demonstration of how early childhood outcomes link with school learning.

- The importance of valuing staff in their efforts to engage in innovative and thoughtful new pedagogical approaches

Professionals who are following new pedagogical approaches need to be encouraged and reinforced for their openness to learning to know children better and learning what principles guide other professionals in this endeavour. The processes of reflection, confrontation of beliefs, articulation of current practices and the richness of debate and learning from action research are very substantive professional development activities directed at improving practice that will make a difference to the lives of young children.

Elsewhere, for example in the United States, early childhood education reform has emerged mainly through the individual efforts of innovative individuals rather than systemic reform (Schultz & Lopez, 1995 in Willer, 1998). It is notable then that in the New South Wales context, systemic support is being offered to encourage improvements and to nurture new directions and, in the process, establish a culture of enquiry, learning and continuous improvement.

## THE QUEST FOR QUALITY IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The quest to define best practice and produce good quality children's services has been enduring, on a National and State/Territory level. In this quest, inevitably tensions arise between efforts to set standards and to question practices. In Australia, the eighties and early nineties were times of heightened attention to standard setting in the early childhood profession, particularly through vigorous debate about regulations, through the development and implementation of the Commonwealth Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS), and support and promotion of two major documents - The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Australian Early Childhood Association's Code of Ethics. Local emphases mirrored international developments to promote early childhood professionalism and quality practices.

### • Quality Assurance and Regulations

In New South Wales there had been strong interest in standards for children's services which led to the piloting of the American National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation System by the Australian Early Childhood Association (NSW Branch) as a forerunner of a national system. The initial enthusiasm and success in this pilot strongly influenced the development of the Commonwealth QIAS developed for the Australian context.

In the United States, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published position statements on developmentally appropriate practice largely in response to the NAEYC Accreditation System which called for "developmentally appropriate" materials, approaches, activities and expectations as part of its quality assurance scheme (NAEYC, 1984; 1991).

The statements were also in response to a trend of "push down" curriculum entering early childhood programs from public school influences. These publications provoked unprecedented interest in the early childhood field but vigorous debate ensued. Critiques of the statements dominated the literature (for example, Bloch, 1991; Fleer, 1995; Mallory & New, 1994; Reifel, 1991; Spodek, 1991 Swadener & Kessler, 1991). An outcome of the debate included considerable revision of the statements on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and the development of further guidelines for appropriate content and assessment (Bredekamp & Rosengrant, 1992; 1995). Indeed it could be argued that the major contribution that the initial position statements on DAP made was that the standard-setting function stimulated the questioning function, resulting in increased attention and conversation about early childhood practices (Bredekamp, 1998).

Debate was not limited to the United States. In fact the very notion of statements that could define DAP objectively in all contexts stirred international debate. Some of the issues debated still remain challenges locally and internationally: curriculum and assessment; the role of the teacher; the role of culture in development; attention to the individual child; and relationships with families (Bredekamp, 1998).

Minimum standards for all centre based and mobile services in New South Wales are regulated by the *Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Services Regulation (No 2) 1996* and family day care by the *Family Day Care and Home Based Child Care Services Regulation 1996* both of which are currently under review. For the majority of service types in New South Wales, the relevant Regulation provides the sole regulatory framework for standard setting. Some services exceed these standards in some or all areas of operation. Support in pursuing higher standards is offered through major early childhood services providers, training and resource agencies and other relevant professional or service organisations.

For long day care services, the Commonwealth QIAS also set standards, albeit at a higher level than the minimum regulatory standards (Greishaber, 2000). Until recently, achievement of higher quality for service types not included in the QIAS has been the result of personal and professional beliefs, knowledge and skills as opposed to outcomes derived from specifications of any additional mandatory support framework. However, this situation could soon change. The QIAS was piloted in New South Wales for state funded preschools and occasional care services and is currently with the Minister. A quality assurance system has commenced for Commonwealth funded family day care services.

For many the movement to define best practice and quality represents a search for definitive benchmarks, objective criteria and absolute standards to which they can aim and which can delineate predictable outcomes in their work. Concerted efforts have been made to reflect research findings in processes and outcomes in policies and systems such as the QIAS. These inclusions have served a major function to inform the field about new knowledge and to raise the standards generally in the long day care sector (Taylor, 1999).

Built into QIAS is the notion of continuous improvement involving ongoing reflection on practice and work towards accreditation principles. To some, the principles are viewed as ceilings of quality, while for others they represent guides in their endeavours to learn from the quality literature and to build cultures of continuous learning and improvement (Duffie & Farmer, 1993). For most people, however, quality remains a challenge, some known standard to be achieved. For others quality is an open and complex issue which needs to be questioned, continually worked through as it is never an absolute (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999).

## • Defining Quality

Most of the research on quality processes and outcomes has been linked to centre-based child care services. While liberal assumptions are being made in generalising the findings to all service types, this research provides the best evidence for direction at this time. There have been basically three waves of research on quality outcomes in child care that have informed policy and practice (Wangmann, 1995). The first wave addressed the question: Is child care harmful to children? The second wave teased through the components of good quality related to good outcomes for children. The third wave has adopted a more complex approach by looking at the components of child care interacting with the home setting and the socio-cultural setting in influencing outcomes of the child. Intense research activity over the last fifteen years in particular has left the field with a much clearer idea of key elements and dynamics of quality. Although this base is by no means absolute, it is a substantial information base which already has assisted in providing significant direction towards improved practices.

Components that contribute to, but are not by themselves sufficient in determining quality outcomes for the child are 'environmental' factors such as funding, regulations, appropriate staff-child ratios, group sizes, staff training and appropriate physical conditions, wages and conditions for staff. Consistently training in early childhood education and child development are shown as the most significant contributing component of quality programs (Phillips, 1987; Phillips, McCartney & Scarr, 1987; Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1990; National Project on the Quality of Teaching & Learning, 1998; Honig & Hiralli, 1999;). Components that have been identified as determinants of good quality outcomes in children cluster under the grouping of developmentally appropriate practice: high

standards of health and safety practices; implementation of developmentally appropriate curricula; sensitive, responsive staff-child interactions and demonstrated staff/parent co-operation at all levels (Wangmann, 1995).

Yet the notion of quality remains highly problematic and is no doubt dependent upon the perspective adopted (Farquhar, 1990; Katz, 1993). Quality can be perceived and defined quite differently by statutory bodies, users, parents, staff or research and practice. Te Whariki, for example, defines quality in a very broad way as “the essential components of early childhood environments which are valued in our society, and which support the well being, development and rights of children, and support effective family functioning” (Smith, 1999, 9). Capturing the essence of this element – “quality” can be both difficult and highly contentious.

In recent years notions of quality with identifiable, prescribed outcomes have undergone critical scrutiny (Dahlberg et al, 1999). Beyond questioning whether it is possible to describe appropriate practices and quality outcomes for all children in all settings, it is further questioned whether we should even attempt to do so (Klein & Hatch, 1995). Even if it is possible to do this, questions relating to levels of quality remain problematic and undefined (Morgan, 1996).

Dahlberg et al (1999) argue that the concept and language of quality are modern constructs which have limitations in that they cannot accommodate issues such as diversity, multiple perspectives, contextual specificity and subjectivity. They argue set parameters associated with quality can also tend to limit vision and they maintain that there is a need to move from definitive benchmarking to building cultures of continuous improvement with an emphasis on reflection, questioning, analysis and change. In their view, there is a need to go beyond the concept of quality to that of “meaning making” in the situations in need of improvement. An approach of meaning making or tailoring the solution to the situation is viewed by them as more compatible with issues of diversity, complexity, subjectivity and multiple perspectives if professionals are wanting to progress with their best efforts.

*The Practice of Relationships* embraces these quality considerations. It aims to support professionals in planning and delivering services that embody known quality practice as well as their thoughtful attempts to forge ahead towards new meanings and understandings in quality. Professionals are urged to observe closely, to construct their own meanings from individual circumstances and to apply their developing understandings in their best efforts for children.

## CURRICULUM APPROACHES INFLUENCING CURRENT THINKING AND PRACTICES

Strong elements soundly grounded in theory and practice which are features of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, the Anti-bias Curriculum, the Reggio Emilia experience and *Te Whariki* are embraced in *The Practice of Relationships*.

- **Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

Early childhood has held a strong developmental tradition in thinking and practice. Statements in the first edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp, 1987) attempted to articulate comprehensively the elements associated with this tradition. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) was clearly based on a normative age and stage based, Piagetian perspective which was dominantly child centred. Under this approach, programs would be planned according to an adult's expectation of children based on ages and stage-based developmental theory. Emphasis would be placed on the child exploring and discovering the world through self-directed play. The program would be planned to match capabilities giving due attention to developmental considerations from two perspectives - stage appropriateness and individual appropriateness.

Many concerns were expressed in relation to the original DAP guidelines (Fleer, 1995; Dockett, 1995; Mallory, 1994; New 1994; Lubeck, 1994; Powell 1994; Genishi, Dyson & Fasler, 1994). Slavish following of this approach meant that the child would be exposed to experiences to complement abilities which had already emerged, overlooking the important role the adult could play in extending the child. In addition criticism was levied at limitations

of DAP such as the absence of cross-cultural perspectives and diversity matters.

However, DAP was strong in highlighting the crucial importance of sensitive and responsive staff-child interactions, the most significant determinant of quality outcomes in young children's programs (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). In reality adults following DAP who are sensitive and responsive to young children usually go beyond a pure Piagetian approach, adopting more of a Vygotskian model to extend the child using scaffolding techniques. DAP was also strong in providing support for the view that early childhood education should be different from the education of older children. It assisted greatly in articulating the importance of the early years and in establishing professional understanding of differences in expectations for children of different ages, particularly differentiating expectations for children under the age of three years from those approximately three to eight years of age.

In 1997 a strengthened second edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* was published by the NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). This later edition has embraced many of the deficits of the first edition. This strengthened version may stand as an historic statement of the knowledge base until further developments in the debate on appropriate practice can be captured. It provides guidance on part of the way professionals go about their work, not the complete picture. Bredekamp (1998, 186) asserted in the revised edition that it (DAP) can "help early childhood professionals to view teaching young children as a constant process of professional decision making that is guided by a knowledge base but that is also constructed daily in interactions with children, families, and colleagues".

It can be argued that the traditional developmental psychology perspective (not necessarily Piagetian based) has informed early childhood practice for a

long time and contributed to a strong foundation in early childhood practice. DAP certainly made a tremendous impact as a framework in putting a case for how young children learn and develop. In recent years more attention has shifted to an emphasis on development and learning occurring in social contexts (Hayes in Goodnow, Miller & Kessel, 1995).

Ironically, many of the critics of DAP have been experienced early childhood professionals who have reached a sound level of understanding of early childhood education based on a Piagetian developmental approach. Although many of the criticisms of DAP were warranted, care must be taken not to abandon the strengths of developmental perspectives. The period of critique and review can be viewed positively as an historical step of questioning, reflecting and refining in the journey towards a more inclusive model of working with young children.

### • The Antibias Curriculum

The publication of *The Antibias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* by the NAEYC in 1989 significantly impacted upon practice by emphasising diversity of professionals, children, families and communities with whom they worked. It urged the valuing of diversity in many forms (gender, culture, language, development, race, experience) and the promotion of equity. Through preservice education and professional development opportunities, there was large scale interest and impact on adults who learned to model positive attitudes towards diversity, learning to find out what their own biases were and learning to address these positively. Gonzalez-Mena (1998) draws attention to the complexity of diversity issues in considering culture in the early childhood workplace. The child's home culture, the staff's home culture and the early childhood culture intersect. Understanding these complexities and

responding sensitively in an antibiased manner are required if the child is to be fully appreciated for the distinct characteristics and background values s/he brings to the learning situation. Where critics of the original DAP emphasised the omission of cultural awareness, considerable influence from *The Antibias Curriculum* is reflected in the subsequent edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (1997)*, constituting a shift in the early childhood knowledge base.

### • Reggio Emilia Experience

The Reggio Emilia experience (from Italy) in early childhood education may be a somewhat recent discovery for Australian early childhood professionals but it has a long impressive history dating back to just after World War II. Cohesion of the community, which played an active part in The Resistance, Italian respect for childhood and the desire for the community to come together to build a better society combined to provide an ideal context in which the strong Reggio Emilian early childhood tradition was established. It has been a history of the world discovering the success of Reggio Emilia and wanting to find out more of the philosophy and wisdom of the approach rather than self promotion on the part of its constructors. The knowledge base has been co-constructed by teachers, children, family and community over time. Reggio Emilia represents a dynamic way of thinking, believing, discovering and constantly evolving (Millikan, 1996; 1997). According to Mallaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia centres and schools -

*"our work is just one of the ways we have found to do things...it is not implementing a model but working together to find what could be the best we could offer to our children"*

(Dahlberg et al, 2000, 13).

The centres of Reggio Emilia are learning cultures dedicated to furthering their knowledge about children.

*The development of current practice in the Reggio Centres is based on a socio-constructivist and creative perspective which has evolved from considering and reconsidering the implications of many theories from many disciplines. At the present time, the educators empathise with the work of John Dewey, Howard Gardiner, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner, but more importantly, they are continually involved in their own centre-based research. This research is both to further their understanding of children's ability to construct knowledge through a group process, and to inform their role as teachers. This process enables the development of their own theories, because there is a strong belief here that theories do, and should, come from practice. This on-going centre-based research is able to be achieved because Reggio Emilia is not just a series of city-run centres, but rather a system of education, with collaboration between all those involved, and with structures that support their view of children and childhood.*

(Millikan, 1997, 3).

All Reggio centres share a very strong belief base related to teaching, learning and relationships. Their image of the child and the importance they attribute to communication and collaboration underpin all aspects of the curriculum. They perceive the child as strong and powerful, one who is both constructor and co-creator of his/her own knowledge. They value the child developing as an individual but they also value the child relating within a group which they view as a microcosm of society. The skills of communication and collaboration needed within a group are promoted across all relationships and are seen as the basis for any community.

In this system of teaching and learning, the child and the adult learn with others and from each other, and what is learned is communicated in a range of ways: spoken and written 'languages', performance 'languages' and many graphic 'languages'. Progettazione referring to the numerous experiences surrounding a project undertaken in depth by a small group over time; documentation of children's ideas, thinking processes and work which makes the children's learning visible; and regard for the influence of the environment which is viewed as the "third teacher" are also strong features of the Reggio Emilia experience. These values have taken Reggio Emilian children to depths in learning and understanding formerly not thought possible for children of such a young age.

Reggio Emilian programs have never been evaluated against a set of predetermined outcomes. It is an approach that displays respect for problematising, analysing and questioning their processes in an effort to find out what works for them. The Reggio Emilia experience is far removed from definitive benchmarking to cultures of continuous improvement with no predetermined limits. The outcomes of the children and communities involved in these programs have astounded professionals working in the early childhood arena. The centres and schools have become destinations for regular delegations for many educators motivated to learn more about the philosophy and day to day construction of meaningful experiences for young children.

The Reggio Emilia evidence has hastened comparisons with existing early childhood educational practices; challenged examination of the assumptions and principles of current operations; questioned the depth of current commitment to assisting children to develop and learn; and confronted professionals to consider the depth to which the inclusion of families and communities are valued in the education of young children.

*Reggio provides living witness to how the creation of a crisis in thinking and a struggle over meaning can produce opportunities, opening up the possibility of viewing children, early childhood institutions and early childhood pedagogy in new ways – the child and the pedagogue as co-creator of knowledge and identity, the early childhood institution as a forum in civil society and early childhood pedagogy as one of the main projects of that public space with the purpose of enabling children to have the courage to think and act for themselves.*

(Dahlberg et al, 1999, 123)

### • New Zealand - Te Whariki

*Te Whariki* (1996) is an innovative, national curriculum framework developed over a number of years in extensive consultation with and support from practitioners. It is unique in that within its framework it has a distinct, bicultural structure with a separate yet interrelated framework for Maori perspectives. The development of a national curriculum for all service types was regarded by the Ministry of Education as a major initiative in promoting high quality early childhood education as well as a step towards making the integration of care and education of early childhood services in New Zealand a reality (Smith, 1999).

The outset of New Zealand's curriculum framework development process coincided with the period of extensive critique of DAP. New Zealand criticism of the idea of DAP related to basing a curriculum on age - and stage - based developmental theory as well as to the main emphasis being on the child learning through self-directed play in resource rich environments (Singer, 1996; Smith, 1996; 1999). There was also agreement that DAP did not reflect the goals and values of the broader society even though it tends to affirm what is happening in early

childhood education (Smith, 1999, 8). Additionally there were views that too much emphasis on the original DAP could contribute to a "laissez-faire attitude to children's learning" (McNaughton, 1996) and honouring child centredness at the expense of capitalizing on the supportive role of the adult (Singer, 1996). According to Carr (1998b) the literature on learning impacted on planning in providing considerable evidence that the context is crucial, that developmental trajectories are not universal, and that teaching in early childhood is much more than the teaching of fragmented skills and knowledge.

The development of *Te Whariki* was shaped by research findings on quality, particularly those relating to social interactions and experiences of children in the program, termed by Smith (1999) as "process quality". Evidence from the literature which provided guidance in the development of the curriculum framework was:

- *The quantity of interaction which children have with their teachers and the amount of attention they receive is one important aspect of process quality – children who interact little with teachers are less likely to profit from their experience in early childhood education settings.*
- *The quality of teacher/child relationships is an important element of quality – children can have stable secure or insecure attachments with their teachers which are independent from their attachments to their parents. Secure attachments are predictive of later social competence.*
- *Joint attention episodes, where adult and child are jointly engaged in attention to outside events, actions or objects, are an important indicator of process quality.*

- *Positive and harmonious peer interactions are associated with high quality care whereas aggression and non-compliance between peers are associated with poor quality care.*
- *Support and sensitivity towards parents, clear communication and information sharing are likely to lead to trusting relationships between early childhood staff and parents and enhance process quality.*

(Smith, 1999, 9)

In establishing the curriculum framework, ecological and sociocultural perspectives were adopted. Following the ideas of Bronfenbrenner (1979) attention was focussed on more than just the child. The New Zealand curriculum framework is grounded in sociocultural theory which expounds that development occurs through experiences in the context of social interactions and relationships (Fleer, 1992; Smith 1996). In contrast to the stage-based developmental theory, this curriculum framework is based on a belief in the possibility of a variety of pathways of development reflecting what is emphasised, for example, cultural goals. It further emphasises the role of the adult to be one of active involvement in learning with and extending the children, making the approach more correctly labeled Vygotskian-sociocultural. The relationship can be illustrated as a...

*"reciprocal partnership where adults and children jointly construct understanding and knowledge. The sociocultural system within which children learn is the most important aspect of quality in early childhood settings. Children participate in cultural activities with skilled partners and come to internalise the tools for thinking they have practiced in social situations. Hence the relationship and interactions between adults and children and children and children in early childhood services are the key components of the construct known as quality."*

(Smith, 1999, 7)

The curriculum framework is based on four broad principles –

- empowerment
- holistic development
- family and community and
- relationships.

And the key features of the are:

- Respect for the primacy of parents
- Co-ordinated and holistic approach
- Improving quality without restricting diversity
- Respecting cultural differences
- Preserving cultural heritage and language
- Encouraging access by disadvantaged groups
- Open-endedness
- Inclusive program that is not defined by ages and stages or ability
- Play and the natural environment

(Smith, 1999).

*Te Whariki* is a metaphor for a woven mat which is made up of strong and interdependent threads or strands that give the mat its strength.

## THE ELEMENTS OF THE NSW CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

### The Practice of Relationships: Essential Provisions for Children's Services

*The Practice of Relationships: Essential Provisions for Children's Services* has been developed from a perspective of openness to reflect upon and learn from significant tenets and principles of effective curriculum models, research and new approaches that have already gained considerable interest among New South Wales early childhood professionals. It adopts a sociocultural perspective where children are encouraged to take an active role in the management of their own learning, choosing meaningful experiences to discover and explore, scaffolded by their teachers. This approach is associated with more positive outcomes in contrast with teacher-directed and highly structured models (Greenberg, 1992; Howes & Droege, 1993; Phillips & Stipek, 1993; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997; Smith, 1999; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996).

It embodies a number of strong assertions which effectively provide its structure. Directed primarily at professionals working in all types of children's services, *The Practice of Relationships* provides an affirming yet challenging reference for what is believed to be the essence of good practice.

The approach to the development of the document was to combine tradition with innovation. Consequently, contemporary knowledge and traditional ways of thinking about children, contemporary childhood, and practice with children and families in children's services, have been expressed in a way that both validates the challenges faced and assists professionals to reflect on and expand the provisions they are making for children.

*The Practice of Relationships* is a curriculum framework as opposed to a curriculum. It is deliberately far more open ended than a traditional curriculum document and does not aspire to meet the more prescriptive requirements of a curriculum, which can be described as -

*an organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.*

(Bredenkamp & Rosengrant, 1992, 10).

In contrast, this Framework aims to structure and support the curriculum decision making experience, or all the provisions made by professionals in support of the child's well-being and learning. It is a way of thinking by professionals about the **how** and **why** of what they do. The Framework builds on a substantive knowledge base from developmental theory, research findings related to quality in early childhood education as well as the collective wisdom of practitioners. The Framework is both a seminal resource and one that can be used to extend the use of other resources. It acknowledges multiple perspectives of professionals in approaching the curriculum building challenge and fully supports the use of a variety of ways of engaging with and knowing children. Its intent is very much to encourage professionals to go beyond what they are currently doing, to make a qualitative difference to their practice.

The Framework appeals to the professionalism of practitioners to construct and improve their own understanding and meaning of working with young children through application in their own ways in their own settings, mirroring openness through professional reflection and action research.

*The Practice of Relationships* is founded on pervasive values supporting both the professional's practice and the children:

- Openness
- Diversity
- Respect for others and for the physical world
- Service, commitment to others well-being and to the good of the community
- Connection, relationship and collaboration
- Feelings, as well as thoughts and behaviour, as ways of understanding and communicating
- Resilience and perseverance
- Beauty
- Thoughtfulness and critical reflection
- Continuous pursuit of knowledge and understanding

Four core contextual concepts are embraced within *The Practice of Relationships* and permeate all areas:

- About children's services: Children's services are communities of learners that exist on behalf of children's well being and learning.
- About the role of professionals: The decisions, judgments and choices made by professionals are the major contributors to children's experience.
- About curriculum: Curriculum is the intentional provisions made by professionals to support children's learning and well being.
- About frameworks: A framework both provides definition and supports uniqueness.

Throughout, the Framework embodies a number of key assertions that are either explicit or implicit. It is noted that all these assertions have implications for a model for a democratic society.

### • Children's services as critical institutions in the broader community

The Framework strongly asserts that children's services play a pivotal role in the lives of young children, their families, professionals and the community at large. They are both part of the community and microcosms of desirable, larger communities. Implicit in this conceptualisation are layers of roles and relationships which can support and in turn be supported by the child and the family as respected, contributing citizens of their community. This context provides far more than preparation for later life, rather it is life. The Framework for children's services can also be argued as also a framework for the larger community. It defines the larger community that gives children a desirable framework for their lives, a lens through which to view themselves, others, and the world around them.

The dynamics of a community in action, with the richness of its diversity, relationships, connections, and interactions are illustrated at the children's service level as a microcosm of society. The prominent and supportive role that the community can play in child rearing is highlighted. As part of the geographical and professional community, the children's service is an entrance point for support for children's well-being and families' child rearing efforts. It is a point at which support can be received, information can be shared and it is also a starting point for families engaging in other community activities. For some this might materialise in involvement in the children's service or other agencies, being aware of the resources the community network can offer, and generally feeling more comfortable and respected as contributing members of the community.

*Children's services operate as microcosms of desirable larger communities, where children live with and are supported to adopt values, attitudes and ways of living that will enable them to be effective members of the broader communities in*

*which they live now and will live in the future. Children, no matter how young, are respected contributing members of the community. (The Practice of Relationships)*

- **Families and the community sharing child rearing**

The primacy of parents' roles in influencing the child's learning in life is upheld. Empowerment of parents as the most enduring and potent force in the long term development of the child and as persons with responsibility to be involved in decision making about the child's life are guiding rationales about the parent-professional partnerships (Duwa, Wells & Lalinde, 1993; Powell, 1994; Dunst, 1997; Greenman & Stonehouse, 1997; Allen & Petr, 1998).

It is vitally important that parents are truly involved in the lives of their children. This need does not alter when some of the child's life is being spent in children's services. In a sense, parents and professionals are linked in roles that resemble those of shared parenting, with professionals as agents of the community sharing complementary roles and responsibilities of child rearing. The professional is encouraged to actively promote the need for continuous involvement and true partnerships with families.

*The most significant contribution the children's services staff can make to a child is to enhance parents' understanding and appreciation of their child, increase their confidence in carrying out the challenging and enormously complex role of being a parent, and to re-inforce their appreciation of the fact that they are the most important people in their child's life (The Practice of Relationships).*

- **The child as a citizen with rights and responsibilities**

A refreshing, positive perspective on the child is embodied in the theoretical conceptualization. The image of the child is one of strength, power, rights, competence, complexity and possibility (New 1994; 1998; 1999[a]; 1999[b]). The young child is valued for his/her inherent worth in the early childhood period of life, not merely for the person they may become during the formal school years or adulthood. All children, regardless of differences in ability, development, or cultural or experiential backgrounds, are viewed with positive regard for their abilities and resourcefulness in contrast to a negative, deficit perspective (Mallory, 1998; New, 1998; Germanos-Kousounadis, 2000). Such a stance casts a positive, equitable tone on all opportunities and possibilities for the child. The attribution of current citizen status implies that the child has rights including those of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Framework also supports the child learning to live responsibly and respectfully in society, displaying care towards others and physical things (New, 1999).

- **The inappropriateness of labelling some services or even parts of the day as educational, and others as care**

*The Practice of Relationships* adopts a strong position on the inappropriateness of labelling some services as educational and others as care. It conceptualises children's services incorporating both care and education components rather than arbitrary division according to service type (Caldwell, 1989; CESCEO, 2000). Good quality children's services of all types are acknowledged as living and learning environments.

Similarly, any artificial division of the child's day into educational and care periods is rejected. The curriculum is considered as the complete set of opportunities and possibilities permeating the whole day. It covers all provisions and offerings professionals make to support the well-being and learning of the child.

- **The complexity, depth and breadth of the roles, essential skills, knowledge and attitudes required of professionals working with children and families in children's services**

The term *professionals* is used purposefully to reflect the nature of the work required of those working in the field of early childhood. The term can be quite contentious in the minds of some but it is the apt noun associated with the professionalising of the early childhood field and with the promotion of quality (Bredenkamp & Willer, 1993). With its usage the early childhood field is making a determined attempt to distance itself from any assumption that anyone can do the job. The education of young children in group settings requires specialised knowledge and skills including those which:

- Demonstrate an understanding of child development and apply this knowledge in practice;
- Observe and assess children's behaviour in planning and individualised teaching practices and curriculum;
- Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment for children;
- Plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum that advances all areas of children's learning and development, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical competence;
- Establish supportive relationships with children and implement developmentally appropriate techniques of guidance and group management;
- Establish and maintain positive and productive relationships with families;
- Support the development and learning of individual children, recognising that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of the early childhood profession and make a commitment to professionalism. (Willer, 1994, 13).

The Framework nominates essential predispositions or qualities required of all professionals: empathy, respect, optimism, and perseverance. The role of the professional is critical to the success of the Framework in that it is predominantly the judgement of the professional that shapes the experiences of both the children and their families using the children's services.

The judgement and wisdom of the professional is linked with the level of understanding of arenas such as child development theory and early childhood education, consistent with research findings (Phillips, 1987; Phillips, McCartney & Scarr, 1987; Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1990; National Project on the Quality of Teaching & Learning, 1998; Honig & Hiralli, 1999). While the Framework does not call for all professionals to hold formal qualifications, it puts the case vigorously for strong leadership by qualified staff to model, support and guide the teams working directly with children and their families. Moreover, the crucial need for ongoing development opportunities for professionals to improve their understanding in these key areas is emphasised.

Attention is devoted to the position of power vested in professionals. From their position, professionals need to take the lead to share power and to

promote real partnerships with children and families if meaningful exchange, understanding and learning from each other is to be experienced (New, 1999). Forming meaningful working relationships can be very challenging, particularly when parties have differing perspectives on the child. Successful partnerships harness this difference, basing the relationship on complementary perspectives of the parent and the professional being brought together in the best interests of the child (Greenman & Stonehouse, 1997; Stonehouse, 1989).

- **The superiority of collaboration in respectful relationships**

*For a curriculum to respond to anticipated skills, attitudes and knowledge essential for life in the 21st century, interpretations of an early childhood curriculum must go beyond a "curriculum is what happens" (Dittman, 1974) to envisioning an early childhood curriculum as how things ought to be. Such a curriculum requires that teachers promote educational goals and utilise educational strategies that acknowledge children's past, respond to their present, and hold promise for their future.*

(New, 1999, 278)

Respectful relationships can be both the goals and the strategies to meet these requirements. Respectful and thus life –enhancing relationships are the cornerstone of the Framework, with communication a key tool in making relationships work. Such relationships are viewed as ideal contexts to promote the well-being of the child and for living and learning together with others (Lally, 1998; Fonagy, 1999; New 1999(b); Dahlberg et al, 2000). Social relationships and daily life issues become a large part of the curriculum. Children learn through involvement and collaboration about resolving conflicts, establishing boundaries and determining how they wish to proceed after considering their own views along with others.

Relationships are seen of such significance that no longer is the program viewed as "child-centred" but rather as "child-in-the-context-of-relationships-centred", bound with parents, teachers, other children and the community (Dahlberg et al, 2000).

While working alone and independence are also supported, social relationships and exchanges with others are promoted as the basis for living and working co-operatively. These social relationships extend to parents who form part of the learning team. In these relationships in action, children have the opportunity to witness and experience the power of working together, the importance of belonging, the significance of social relationships and the ethic of inclusion (New 1999a; 1999b). Watching as their parents and teachers (and possibly themselves) come together to work out goals and then experiencing working towards those goals with support is a simple yet powerful way for the child to learn the power of multiple points of view.

Children's services can play an important role in leading children to live and work with others. While their need for family is paramount, there is also a need for young children to be introduced into community life (New, 1999(b)). Through this exposure they can be introduced to a whole web of interdependent social relationships.

Within these relationships, professionals are urged to be sensitive interpreters who practice in ways that optimise the possibilities for children to make desirable meanings. While this relates to listening and 'reading' the child well for the meanings they convey to us, it also relates to the connections and emphases that can be experienced in the context of relationships. An emphasis on respect places attention clearly onto others' abilities and competencies. Not only do the children learn to view themselves as capable from being respected in this way, they learn to respond in terms of others'

strengths. Respect in action becomes the basis of honouring diversity within these relationships. Children can be assisted to become comfortable with diversity and difference. First hand they can gain an appreciation of fundamental commonalities and experience the notion of unity through diversity.

The Framework provides a multidimensional lens through which the professional's orientations may be filtered and reorganised. There are four major obligations which the professional is working towards and which provide the most incisive direction for the professional.

- To promote and support life-enhancing relationships
- To practice in ways that acknowledge the child as capable and resourceful
- To strive for meaning and connections
- To honour diversity.

Use of *The Practice of Relationships* may be likened to a journey that is never ending, although the perspective is clear. Superficially, it gives almost tacit affirmation to current practices, yet all the while it signals a constant challenge for professionals to become involved actively and engage more deeply and meaningfully with children and their families to enhance the learning process, at a much deeper level. Since this challenge is multidimensional and extends to individual children in individual learning circumstances, it will always be dynamic and in need of continuous application and improvement. While this realisation may be somewhat overwhelming initially, it is testimony to the complexity of the early childhood knowledge base and the professional's role in quality teaching.

The development of a curriculum framework for NSW children's services is driven by a desire to enhance the quality of current service provision and to equip young children for life now as strong,

confident contributors to the community now and in the future. The Practice of Relationships builds on features believed to be the basis of good practice. It is not a simple recipe. It provides the necessary starting structure to support professionals in questioning, reflecting, striving for meaning in collaborations, relationships and practice. It is freely acknowledged that it will not provide all the answers. This is consistent with the views of Bredekamp (1998, 186):

*One book cannot solve all the problems of an imperfect field. What it can do is help early childhood professionals to view teaching young children as a constant process of professional decision making that is guided by a knowledge base but that is also constructed daily in interactions with children, families and colleagues.*

The Practice of Relationships embodies a range of strong values, concepts, enterprises and undertakings to support practice in many different ways across children's services in New South Wales.

*It is hoped that the Framework will be long lasting. However, it does reflect some current thinking around a set of beliefs and understandings that are appropriate at this time in New South Wales. It also reflects the social, political, and professional context in which it has been written. These contexts will alter, and understandings and beliefs will be added to and altered in ways that cannot now be envisaged. They will be translated into practice in ways that are unique in each service, in each encounter, reflecting the individual and collective creativity, wisdom and innovation that comes out of collaboration (The Practice of Relationships).*

## APPENDIX A.

### THE FRAMEWORK

#### CORE CONCEPTS

ABOUT CHILDREN'S SERVICES: CHILDREN'S SERVICES ARE COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS THAT EXIST IN THE INTEREST OF CHILDREN'S WELLBEING AND LEARNING

ABOUT THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONALS: THE DECISIONS, JUDGMENTS AND CHOICES MADE BY PROFESSIONALS ARE THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE

ABOUT CURRICULUM: CURRICULUM IS THE INTENTIONAL PROVISIONS MADE BY PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND WELLBEING

ABOUT FRAMEWORKS: A FRAMEWORK BOTH PROVIDES DEFINITION AND SUPPORTS UNIQUENESS

#### MAJOR OBLIGATIONS

TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT RESPECTFUL LIFE-ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS

TO PRACTISE IN WAYS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHILD AS CAPABLE AND RESOURCEFUL

TO STRIVE FOR MEANING AND CONNECTIONS

TO HONOUR DIVERSITY

#### ESSENTIAL QUALITIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

EMPATHY

RESPECT

PERSEVERANCE AND RESILLIANCE

PASSION FOR LEARNING THAT LEADS TO GROWTH

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