



By Louise Dorrat

EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Each service in FDC must appoint an educational leader to lead the development and implementation of the educational program. An educational leader can be an educator or a staff member from the coordination unit.

What qualifications and experience is required?

The National Regulations do not specify a minimum qualification or the number of hours the educational leader should work, or whether this person must work directly with children. The educational leader should be the person most suited to this role in the service after qualifications and experience are taken into consideration. They need a thorough understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the Framework for School Age Care (FSAC) to be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in their implementation practices.

The approved provider is to appoint the educational leader in writing, and note this in the staff record of the service.

What is the educational leader's role in FDC?

- ▶ Leading and being part of reflective practice and implementing the learning frameworks
- ▶ Mentoring other educators by leading quality practice at play sessions or discussions at educator meetings
- ▶ Discussing routines at educator meetings and how to make them more effective learning experiences
- ▶ Writing articles for parents for the FDC service's newsletter about the educational program
- ▶ Considering how the program can be linked to the community by working with other community services such as Aboriginal elders
- ▶ Assisting with documenting children's learning and how these assessments can inform curriculum decision making.

What is happening around Victoria with educational leaders in family day care?

City of Greater Dandenong

My Hue Nguyen is a field officer and was appointed as educational leader because of the number of Vietnamese-speaking educators at the service. My Hue ensures that the educators are up to date with the changes and supports educators in planning to stimulate children's play and learning. She motivates educators to complete their Certificate III and empowers them to take credit for their own work with families and children, and be proud of what they do.

My Hue has her Diploma of Children's Services and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment so is equipped with essential skills and knowledge to facilitate training sessions for the educators. Her extra forte is her Vietnamese language skills in speaking, reading, writing and she can interpret and translate information from English to Vietnamese and vice versa.

Some challenges for My Hue were the few educators who refused to move forward believing that 'This is good enough!' My Hue tries to empower these educators to show them the benefits of the EYLF. Denise Miller, Team Leader, could also see the importance of empowering the Vietnamese educators so asked My Hue and Melda Rasool, the other educational leader to start learning and discussion groups, one for Vietnamese educators and the other for English-speaking educators. The idea is to assist them through the EYLF, link their practices to the learning outcomes and for educators to confidently move forward with the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

My Hue translated the principles, practices and learning outcomes using simple language that all Vietnamese educators at any literacy level could understand, without losing the core of the EYLF. The sessions are delivered in an informal, relaxed atmosphere where educators are engaged and can share with each other their own beliefs, ideas and goals as well as challenges and difficulties. This is simply part of professional self-improvement. At the end of the fourth session, the educators expressed relief, having achieved what at first seemed impossible.

Being in a remote regional area, Michelle is often concerned that she is missing vital information that is available in the city so she tries to keep up to date by reading widely and attending training in her local area and in Melbourne.

Mildura Rural City Council

Michelle Thompson is the quality improvement officer and sees her role as being a leader and a mentor for educators and field officers exploring the EYLF, curriculum decision-making and the planning cycle. She helps those who need extra support and extends the knowledge of those who are adept at their curriculum decision-making and documentation.

Being in a remote regional area, Michelle is often concerned that she is missing vital information that is available in the city so she tries to keep up to date by reading widely and attending training in her local area and in Melbourne. Michelle attended the five-day Abecedarian training and has been sharing with educators the valuable knowledge she gained about the richness of interactions and routines as learning experiences.

Each educator is able to document their program in their own way so that they choose a method that suits them. However as the educational leader, Michelle finds this extra challenging as she has to be vigilant when reviewing the educators' documentation to make sure that they are meeting the requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF). Michelle tries to give educators the confidence to articulate what they do and why they do it. Sometimes the educators know what they are doing but get nervous about making sure they are using the right language and terms. Each of the field officers has a set group of educators and they meet after hours in those groups for Learning Circles. So far there have been discussions about myths and assumptions, the planning cycle and documenting. There is no agenda set for the Learning Circle but they go with the feelings of the group. This works well as it is a place to share information and support each other.

Windermere Family Day Care and In Home Childcare

Alison Johns, a field worker, has a wealth of experience in children's services including working as a centre director and teacher at Swinburne. Alison's passion for the NQF and experience and qualifications in teaching made her a natural choice for this role. Alison has embraced the role and has already provided a strengthened approach to program planning and professional development. She keeps the service up to date with research and best practice, and guides educators and staff to gain a greater understanding of the National Quality Standards. This has resulted in revisiting the passion for working with children.

Windermere delivers its services across two different geographical areas. Communication and the ability to role model to other staff has been a challenge so the team travels between the two sites to ensure effective communication. Another challenge is providing support to educators when there is such diversity in personalities, confidence levels and understandings. At meetings, there is a standing agenda item for Alison to discuss the educational program. They have recently developed the 'butterfly effect', which is in-service training that breaks down the quality elements, and includes self-assessment and individual learning. The service has carefully budgeted for Alison to attend the family day care conference in Brisbane to further extend her skills for the role.

A north east urban family day care service

Divya is an educator and completed her Advanced Diploma of Children Services in 2010 while working full time. Divya's formal qualifications and experience have been recognised by the service and she was appointed educational leader in February. She will be an extra support and resource for educators with programming and will provide them with practical strategies for managing time, workload and resources as requested.

Divya has already been visited by some educators who were requiring assistance with planning and reflection. She is designing PowerPoint presentations to share with educators at meetings to assist with curriculum and program planning requirements. Regular meetings will be planned for educators to exchange valuable information, feedback and resources and to reflect upon practices. Divya believes that the implementation of the NQF is a big change for family day care but with mutual trust, communication and team work between all stakeholders of the service, this will be achieved.

REFERENCES

Education and Care Services National Law Act (No. 69 of 2010): Section 169.

Education and Care Services Nationals Regulations (No. 653, 2011): Regulations 118, 148.

National Quality Standard; Element 7.1.4 and 7.2.2.

Early Childhood Development Steering Committee of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 2009, *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care*, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) 2009, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years*, State of Victoria, Melbourne.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2011, *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, ACT. ●