

**PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**

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## **Scenario 1**

### ***The Need for Children's Agency***

Children's agency simply means the capability of the children to make decisions and choices that affect them. The observation of the toddlers in the learning environment must not consider them as students who need to be taught but rich individuals capable of contributing effectively to learning that is provided to them (Jerome & Starkey, 2022). The outcome for when the child can be denied agency, can result in various unfavorable effects on the cognitive, psychological, and social aspects of the child. If members of a team adopt the deficit approach, toddlers are denied chances to innovate, solve problems or gain self-reliance. Such a strategy can result in rather ineffective learning process during which a child depends much on adults neglecting important developmental stages.

### ***Practices for Improved Children's Agency***

#### **Empower Choice-Making**

Empowering choice-making as a mechanism entails making toddlers have the chance to decide what they want to do during the day. Decision making might pertain to which toys are to be played with, which nutritious foods are to be eaten or which activity to be followed next. In this way, the educators encourage toddlers to take responsibility for themselves as they make their own decisions. These also help in cognitive development as it engages in decision making and problem solving processes. Several studies show that young learners who are offered choices are more valued, stimulated, and have a sense of obligation, hence enhancing their participation, in the learning domain.

#### **Flexible Routines**

Meaningful partnerships entail adjusting the standard teaching-learning schedule to respond to toddlers' developmental levels and preferences. Rather than keeping to a set schedule of activities, teachers are able to strike and respond to the children's signals. This approach is more flexible and less structured, or explicitly adapted to children's needs and interests. Structured activities mean that children at this tender age can regulate themselves as they go through from one activity to the other (Ren et al., 2022). Furthermore, this principle creates confidence and trust because children feel listened to and appreciated, which contributes to the development of their learning process.

### ***Justification***

**NQS Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice (ACECQA, 2020)** has a focus on child learning and rightly points out that the educators must give opportunity that affirms children's own idea, interest, strength and abilities. The criteria of openness and cultural rights support the idea of developing children's agency at a glance taking into account the meaning and relevance of the educational program proposed.

**EYLF Principle 4: Respect for Diversity (AGDE, 2022)** is applicable to the rationale behind privileging each child's actions and their preferences in learning. In this way, educators respect the children's choices and include them in decision-making processes because every child can learn and demonstrate the child's abilities in a different manner.

**EYLF Practice: Responsiveness to Children (AGDE, 2022)** also emphasizes that the adult should engage when children show signs of interest. This practice challenges educators to set up situations, which will be based on child's initiation, and steer children more into becoming active learners.

## **Scenario 2**

### ***Steps to Implement the Healthier Eating Program***

#### **Community and Family Engagement**

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the prescription, the families should first be administered questionnaires to determine their eating habits, choices, and prohibitions. Host meetings to discuss cultural diet practices, this is taking diversity and inclusion into consideration (Maddox & Lock, 2020). Collaborate with other health care professionals, dietitians, and community related organizations to offer seminars for parents in form of information and material about healthy diet to the children so that they can embrace it.

#### **Educational Activities**

Carry out fun cooking activities for the parents and children that would involve preparing healthy meals in order to create practical experiences. Create a garden where children have to grow their own food and understand from the time when they are little that they should eat healthy foods. These activities not only create awareness toward the children and teach them the correct portion sizes to consume but also engage the family members to support the program's key messages at home.

#### **Menu Planning**

Involve families on menu planning and come up with a calendar that the center adapts to accommodate different dietary requirements. To support this process, it is possible to use meetings on a regular basis or submission of suggestions by employees. Promote a balanced diet where the foods served are from all parts of the world thus making the variety on the menu diverse (DiGirolamo et al., 2020). Cultural sensitivity is observed under this approach, not to mention that consumption of healthy food by kids will be encouraged.

## ***Ensuring Participation and Support***

### **Open Communication**

Frequent communication between the client and the instructor is vital for the functioning of the healthier eating program. Weekly newsletters and self-constructed emails as well as parent-teacher conferences will inform the families about the program's progress with a focus on the benefits of healthy eating and students' success stories. Furthermore, creating an avenue to receive feedback from consumers, probably through suggestion boxes or online forms will enable the families to contribute to the decision-making process hence creating commitment toward the program.

### **Community Involvement**

Community support and participation is very desirable and can only be achieved with the aid of holding workshops and several other activities. Cooking shows, health fairs, and nutritionist talks with participation of local chefs, dieticians, and food specialists will give families useful information and products (Cohen & Anders, 2020). Involvement and commitment of the family and members of the community in volunteer activities such as those in tending the garden and the cooking activity were also observed to be intensified during events such as gardening activities, cooking activities and planning of activities for children will also enhance the strengthening of the community for children's healthy eating.

## ***Justification***

**NQS Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety (ACECQA, 2020)** this particular healthier eating program is in line with addressing Standard 2.1 to make sure that everyone's health care needs of each child are met. Thus, engaging families and the community creates a supportive environment for the health and safe development of children, as per the program.

**EYLF Principle 2: Partnerships (AGDE, 2022)** it is crucial to establish partnership with families and communities. This principle drives the need for partnership as families are the key players in the lives of the children. Involving them in the healthier eating program helps to guarantee that they are able to respect their cultural and eating style.

**EYLF Practice: Holistic Approaches (AGDE, 2022)** the holistic strategies in adopting healthy eating habits means that children's physical, emotional, social and cultural aspect are addressed. Thus, the structure of the program and the interconnected activities such as gardening and cooking benefit children and help them feel like they are thankful for their community.

## **Scenario 3**

### ***Reassuring Families***

Separation anxiety is quite expectable during drop off times and the children in the 0-2 years group will be more affected. Such behavior is quite normal as children are developing close and secure relationships and learning how to handle separations. This can prove a trying time for both the child and the parents, and promise to help get through this transition.

### ***Implementation Strategy***

#### **Creating a Welcoming Environment**

Greetings and comfort items remain instrumental in making one feel more at ease and even familiar with the environment. Every child is welcomed personally by an educator known to them in the morning, which makes the child feel important. This enables a child to feel safe when they are separated with their parents, thus reducing the anxiety level (Blewitt et al., 2020). Moreover, having the families encouraged to help their children to have a comfort item from the family ensures children feel comfort zone as they are given objects familiar to them from the family during transitioning to care facilities.

#### **Building Relationships**

The key educator system, as well as procedural consistency, guarantee the nurturing of healthy relationships. Each child is provided with a key person who develops a close bond with him, which is very helpful for the child's stability. This is supported by the ability to sustain consistent daily schedules which gives the children a schedule to work with hence reducing stress. On an aggregate, these practices form a sound and safe child care setting for children and the opportunity to build trust with the care givers.



### ***Justification and Importance***

**NQS Quality Area 5 - Relationships with Children:** Attachment is important in child care in that it is the basis of the child education process and entices a healthy and comfortable relationship between a child and the educators. When children are assured, they are able to learn or explore as opposed to when they are insecure.

**EYLF Principle - Secure, Respectful, and Reciprocal Relationships:** Developing these relations is helpful for the child's psychological stability and capacity to cope with stress. Autonomous thinking of children is effective when they are motivated and protected, and this is done when there is continuous and warm interaction with a teacher.

**EYLF Practice - Continuity of Learning and Transitions:** Transitions are very important aspects of the young child's emotional wellbeing. Children can maintain some level of comfort due to the familiar patterns of a day thus ease the process of separating from their parents and get engaged in learning. It also lists the support parents get because they are relieved that the child is safe and in a stable environment.

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