



Sustainability:

Play-based learning and intentionality

November 2023

This Sustainability practice resource is part of a series of 8 practice resources for Play-based learning and intentionality in early childhood education and care services (ECEC). Each resource is aligned with the Principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0).

Before using this resource, read the [Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality](#). The introduction provides insights into the importance of intentionality in play-based learning in quality, evidence-based ECEC practice with cultural responsiveness at its heart.

Sustainability is an increasingly important issue that children build familiarity with through their everyday lives. Including sustainability in your curriculum should extend beyond an awareness of nature and the environment to also include social and economic sustainability. This includes focusing on rights and responsibilities, consumption and waste of resources, and fairness and equity.

The EYLF V2.0 (p. 17) recognises that:

Social sustainability is about inclusion and living peacefully, fairly and respectfully together in resilient local and global communities. Economic sustainability refers to practices that support economic development without negatively impacting the other dimensions.

When ideas relating to sustainability are included in play-based learning, children can build awareness of how their actions and how the actions of others have an impact on the world.

Strategies for intentionality within play-based learning that can support this Principle include:

- Encourage children’s curiosity and foster an appreciation of the natural world. Consider how a focus on sustainability can be included in and across the curriculum, including indoor and outdoor play, as well as in routines such as mealtimes.
- Recognise children’s capacity to understand complex information relating to sustainability and include relevant language and conceptual information that deepens children’s thinking and knowledge.
- Focus on intentional knowledge building, as well as concepts of social responsibility and citizenship both locally and internationally. As an example, you could identify opportunities in children’s play and routines to build their understanding of equity of access to resources and food for people locally, across Australia and globally.
- Include families and communities to help create shared understandings of the issues relating to sustainability that span across different generations. This can help to create new conversations about fairness, and our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Reflection questions

- How do you help build children’s knowledge of sustainability in your service? What strategies can you use to help children think deeply about sustainability at a local and global level?
- How do you foster an awareness of environmental, social and economic sustainability? How can you encourage conversations about conservation, fairness and social responsibility?

This practice resource is part of a series of 8 Play-based learning and intentionality resources including:

- [Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships](#)
- [Partnerships](#)
- [Respect for diversity](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives](#)
- [Equity, inclusion and high expectations](#)
- [Sustainability](#)
- [Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning](#)
- [Collaborative leadership and teamwork.](#)

Before using the other resources in this series, read the [Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality](#).

They link to the [early childhood learning trajectories](#) suite of resources including the [Learning trajectories user guide](#), [Evidence report](#) and the [Assessment for children’s learning practice resources](#).