



Learning at home: How to support multilingual families

Learning at home has many positive benefits for children, families and Early Childhood Professionals.

For Early Childhood Professionals, it can strengthen their relationships with families through developing a truly holistic approach to supporting a child's developing identity and confidence within their learning dispositions. Early Childhood Professionals are aware that children learn in the context of their families and view families as the child's first teacher (VEYLDF, 2016). As children are learning at home, the notion of children learning within the context of their family is where Early Childhood Professionals need to begin when designing their learning at home program. This is an opportunity for Early Childhood Professionals to listen to and understand a family's circumstances and contexts, as well as acknowledging that families will have different experiences, values and priorities.

Early Childhood Professionals are cognisant of the unique circumstances each family has and how these circumstances will inform the best way to support engagement in learning at home. It is important that Early Childhood Professionals are empowering families to be active participants in their child's learning, and that quality learning experiences can happen in the everyday life of the home environment.

What learning at home looks like for families

At this time, more than ever, it is vital that Early Childhood Professionals maintain their relationships with families. It is through these relationships that Early Childhood Professionals can support families in staying connected with the service and their ongoing engagement in their child's learning.

It is important for Early Childhood Professionals to recognise that the capacity families have to engage in pre-arranged activities provided by the service will differ significantly between families. Some families may have the capacity to utilise the learning at home materials provided by the service, while others may not. It will be important for Early Childhood Professionals to consider how they can support similar learning outcomes within the everyday activities and routines a child and their family engage in.

The kindergarten child may spend the majority of their day playing with siblings, others may spend time playing alone, or with their parents/carers, and for some, they may be helping with daily chores and household activities. It is important that Early Professionals have an understanding of how children are engaged throughout their day to develop holistic and meaningful learning goals which are achievable for the child and family.

It is also important to think about the capacity of the parent/carer when developing your learning at home resources;

- Is one or both parents/carers currently working from home?
- Does the family have the capacity to spend long periods of uninterrupted time with their child to engage in activities? What does this mean for the learning at home materials you have developed?
- How can your planned learning experiences be translated and adapted to suit the individual needs of families and be implemented into their daily life?
- What is the best way to communicate with families taking their current context into account, and what does the family prefer?
- What do they believe is the best way for their child to learn at home?
- What kind of support has the family identified as needing to engage in learning at home?
- How much time do families have to engage in regular conversations about their wellbeing and daily life?

From gathering this information Early Childhood Professionals will be better positioned to develop learning at home materials that will be utilised, meaningful, and support Early Childhood Professionals in their ongoing understanding of the child's learning and development.

Learning at home program ideas

The following points have been collected by *fkaCS* in response to our conversations with Victorian Kindergarten services and what tools and activities have been the most successful in engaging families in learning at home. These suggestions were collected with an understanding that these tools and activities would also support the Early Childhood Professionals in their assessment for children's learning and development.

- Create packs include fun and creative games children can engage in with their family, such as a scavenger hunt around the house focusing on a letter or letter sounds.
- Support families to create stories with their child; these could be oral stories, stories with print and illustrations and/or collage made from recyclable materials found at home.
- Use USB sticks for families that have access to computers/laptops to save activity ideas and images of the child learning and engaging in the kindergarten environment. Showing images of the child in the learning environment will support maintaining connections to the learning environment. This method is great for families who are unable to access online platforms or the internet regularly.
- Encourage families to sing in their own language or their child to teach them songs from the early childhood service.
- Schedule regular video calls with families and children. You can use breakout rooms with parents and children to discuss projects, (sustainability, road safety, environment caring, well-being or emotional development), or allow children to interact with their peers. The teacher can also use this platform to read and sing regularly to children.
- Record bilingual staff reading in the family languages of children and send to families.
- Encourage families to email, send photos, recording their child or post a letter with drawings or photos what they have been doing at home and what they have been enjoying.
- Send home a A3 book for the child to illustrate in what they have been doing (what they have collected on their walks, watched on television, or story they read with their family, cooking with their family, playing games).
- Send home a sheet of physical activities for children, include yoga cards, meditation links, games to play at home.

Thinking about families re-engaging with the kindergarten environment

This can be a time where Early Childhood Professionals can learn more about the kindergarten child's identity, values and hear stories from their families. Creating a stronger link between home life and the Early Childhood Setting will result in stronger, more collaborative relationships with families, from which children's ongoing learning and development will be greater supported. Many of the activities children engage in at home can be transferred to the kindergarten context once children return. These activities may include:

- Songs children engaged in, including those in family languages
- The stories children enjoyed, including those told in family languages
- Counting games
- The skills children have learnt, such as folding and stacking or other daily life skills.

Having strong relationships with families will also support children returning to the service environment. Throughout children's learning at home time, Early Childhood Professionals and families can ensure that children are supported in their emotional and social wellbeing, leading up to their transition. Supporting children's and families transition back into the kindergarten environment can be engaged in throughout the learning at home experience.

It is important for Early Childhood Professionals and families to understand;

- What children are feeling, how they are feeling about going to back to kindergarten or to school?
- What they would like to learn about when they return to kindergarten?
- What have they missed about being at kinder?
- What they are they looking forward doing when they return?

The most important aspect of the learning at home period for Early Childhood Professionals is that the relationships with families and children are maintained and supportive.

By nurturing collaborative relationships and working in partnership with families Early Childhood Professionals are supporting a positive transition back to the early learning environment.

Resources for further learning at home ideas

Queensland Government: earlylearning@home

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/early-learning-at-home>

Department of Education and Training: Learning from home for early childhood education and care services

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/Learning-from-home-in-an-early-childhood-setting.aspx>

Department of Education and Training: FUSE

<https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/>

Independent Schools Victoria: The Parents Website

<https://theparentswebsite.com.au/learning-home-big-list-great-resources/>

For further support in engaging actively with multilingual families, get in touch with fkaCS:

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