



Continuous cycle of improvement

Quality for every child, every day.

Although the Assessment and Rating process is framed as a continuous cycle of improvement, it seems that some of us continue to feel challenged by the thought of the assessment and rating visit. Have you stopped to wonder why this might be? Often we can feel vulnerable, under prepared, overwhelmed and nervous. However, not every service responds like this upon notification of their Assessment and Rating Visit. Some eagerly anticipate the opportunity, impatient to demonstrate their practice and keen for the feedback that the report will offer. So what makes the difference?

Perhaps the difference lies in our understanding of the purpose of the Assessment and Rating process and where the assessment visit sits within that process. If we were to more deeply understand the continuous cycle of improvement then we would be less concerned about that one day every three years and more concerned about quality for every child, every day. Rather than being concerned about what an authorised officer might see on that day, we might become more aware that families, children and our colleagues experience our practice every day; and they have an opinion about the quality of the practice they experience. Do we want a quality environment for an authorised officer once every few years? Or do we want our children and families to enter a quality environment every day?

Every day that we walk through our centre gate, we should be thinking about how we will ensure that the NQS will be met. Not because we want a particular rating but because we know that a quality early education and care environment is the best thing for children and families.

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No.51 published in 2013 suggests that a continuous cycle of improvement may include stages as detailed in this diagram (above right). It indicates to us that our goal of providing a quality environment for children is ongoing and our practices are open for critical reflection



and assessment not once in three years but always. We are asked to consider who is involved in the self assessment process? How do we find out our strengths and areas of improvement? Who will take responsibility for the goals in our QIP? How will we know that we have achieved our goal? How often will we examine our service in this way? The assessment and rating visit will simply happen as a source of critical information somewhere in our own cycle of improvement. It will support this process with a snapshot of how well we are meeting the NQS at that point in time. It is not the beginning or end of the process.

We have the task of not resting on our laurels or putting off plans for improvement but of being the force for improvement ourselves. Relying on a triennial assessment to drive the goals in our QIP is not going to be sufficient. It will take each of us, committed to the children and families in our services and responding as professionals to ensure that quality happens every day.



Effective evaluation and self-review enables a service to continuously improve their policies, procedures and practices. This approach enables the nominated supervisor, educators and coordinators to improve their practice, which contributes directly to improved learning outcomes.

References

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality, Authority (ACECQA) (2011). *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, Sydney: ACECQA

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2013) *NQS PLP e-Newsletter No.51 2013*, Early Childhood Australia

For more information call
(08) 8234 5219

 /GowrieSA

Professional Development with Gowrie SA

To support educators in critiquing and analysing their existing processes for assessment and evaluation of children's learning Gowrie SA have the following opportunities for professional learning.

Introduction to the National Quality Standard for new staff

An introductory overview of the NQS for new staff including leaders, educators, governing bodies and service owners. We will explore the components that make up the National Quality Framework including the National Quality Standard (NQS), national law and national regulations and the learning frameworks.

Using inquiry as a reflective process

How can inquiry projects benefit your service? Explore the process of planning an inquiry, from an initial wondering, to involving your team and community. Look at tools to support change in your site, and hear how it has been used by sites in the recent Universal Access Project.

Reflective practice: let's re-engage and re-examine

Continuously engaging in critical reflection, both as individuals and as teams, maintains ownership of what we do and why we do it. This session will explore the importance of critical reflection. Reflective strategies will be used to unpack and discuss our own personal and professional values and beliefs, and how these translate into service philosophies, practices and documentation.

Change management: leading successful change

Change is a process not an event so it takes time. Successful change needs planning, people to lead it and people to participate in it. The education and care sector continues to experience 'change', therefore it is vital that we understand the concepts of how to lead and support educators in the change process.



To register for sessions

Visit www.gowriesa.org.au/register-training

or scan the QR code to go directly to the registration page on the Gowrie SA website.