SEMANN & SLATTERY

EDUCATIONAL LEADER COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Lead learning with intention

Clear expectations. Honest reflection. Stronger programs.

A four level framework for educational leaders in early childhood and outside school hours care services, and the approved providers and directors who support them.

01
Understand the role.

02
Assess your practice.

03
Plan your next level.

A practical framework with practice stories, self-assessment and a growth plan for educational leaders.

PUBLISHED BY
SEMANN & SLATTERY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We work on colonised land owned by the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation. In working on colonised land we attempt to undo the harmful impacts of colonisation and we invite you to consider, how collectively, we can reconcile the past and work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to pave the way for a future we are all proud of.

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HOW TO CITE THIS FRAMEWORK

When referring to this framework in other documents, please cite it as follows (APA 7th edition).

Reference list: Semann, A. (2026). *The Semann & Slattery educational leader competency framework* (Australian ed.). Semann & Slattery.

In-text citation: (Semann, 2026) or Semann (2026).

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FOREWORD

Educational leadership is a practice, not a title. Being designated as an educational leader in writing is the beginning of the role, not evidence of it. Like any practice, educational leadership can be learned, refined and continuously improved. This framework describes what an effective educational leader in an Australian education and care service knows, does and holds themselves accountable to, across the arc of the role from first designation to leading other educational leaders.

The framework is grounded in the National Quality Framework, including Regulation 118 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) and Element 7.2.2 of the National Quality Standard, as well as in the approved learning frameworks: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0), My Time, Our Place (V2.0), and, in Victoria, the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Throughout, it is committed to relational, reflective and culturally responsive practice.

Educational leadership is a practice, not a title.

The framework is written for two groups: educational leaders who want to understand and grow their practice, and approved providers and service leaders who designate, support, and supervise educational leaders.

INTRODUCTION

What this framework is

The Semann & Slattery Educational Leader Competency Framework outlines the observable behaviours, knowledge and dispositions that make an educational leader effective in early childhood education and care and in outside school hours care services. It is organised around ten domains of practice, forty-two named competencies within those domains, and four developmental levels that describe how each competency deepens as an educational leader's practice matures. It closes with two practical tools: a Self-assessment record and a Growth plan.

Throughout, the term 'service' includes long day care, preschool and kindergarten, family day care, and outside school hours care. The framework applies equally to educational leaders working with children under school age and those working with school-age children.

The framework is designed to serve several purposes at once. It is a self-assessment tool for educational leaders who want to understand where their practice stands and where it can grow. It is a scaffold for supervision and support conversations between educational leaders and the approved providers and nominated supervisors who support them. And it is a reference for role design, recruitment and induction, providing educational leaders and those who support them with a shared language and a common developmental map.

What this framework is not

The framework is not a checklist or an assessment tool for Assessment and Rating. It does not replace the National Law, the National Regulations, the National Quality Standard, or the guidance published by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). Descriptors are indicative rather than exhaustive, and an educational leader who demonstrates the substance of a competency in a different way still demonstrates the competency.

The framework is not a performance-management tool. An educational leader at the Emerging level is not a lesser leader; they are at a different stage of their development. Many capable educators are designated as educational leaders with little preparation, and the framework is intended to support their growth, not to judge them.

An educational leader at the Emerging level is not a lesser leader. They are at a different point in their development.

The framework is not static. The National Quality Framework changed substantially in 2025 and 2026, and the

approved learning frameworks continue to evolve. This document will be reviewed and updated in line with those changes and our own learning.

Grounding in the National Quality Framework

Regulation 118 requires the approved provider to designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, coordinator or other individual as the educational leader to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service. Element 7.2.2 states that the educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and the assessment and planning cycle (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2024).

ACECQA describes the most effective educational leaders as those who view the role as a collegial, joint endeavour, carried out through mentoring, guiding and supporting educators (ACECQA, 2024). Each domain in this framework identifies the regulatory and framework anchors it draws on, and Appendix A maps these anchors in one place.

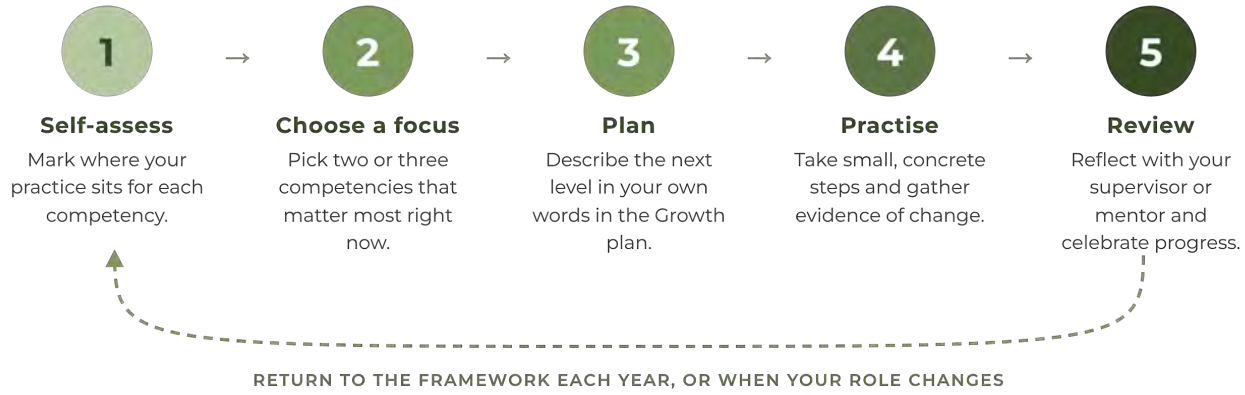
The framework also reflects the child safety reforms that commenced in 2025 and 2026. From 1 January 2026, refinements to the National Quality Standard sharpened the focus on child safety in Quality Areas 2 and 7.

From 27 February 2026, the National Law made children's safety, rights and best interests the paramount consideration in operating an education and care service (ACECQA, 2025, 2026). Domain 6 explains what this means for the educational leader's work.

Grounding in Country

Semann & Slattery is an Australian company operating on the lands of many First Nations peoples. This framework positions cultural responsiveness and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives as central to the role of an educational leader, rather than an add-on. Domain 8 makes this explicit.

HOW TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK



For educational leaders

Read the framework in full before returning to it as a working document. For each competency, identify the level at which you currently sit, honestly, using the Self-assessment record that follows the ten domains. If you are unsure, talk it through with your nominated supervisor, a mentor or a trusted colleague. If you sit lower than you had hoped, remember that the framework is a map, not a mirror.

The framework is a map, not a mirror.

Choose two or three competencies to focus on in a given cycle, record them in the Growth plan that follows the Self-assessment record, and link them to your service's Quality Improvement Plan wherever possible. Trying to develop every competency at once produces motion without movement. Return to the framework annually, or after any substantial change in your role, such as a new service, a new team, or a new approved learning framework.

For approved providers, nominated supervisors and service leaders

Element 7.2.2 expects the educational leader to be supported, not merely designated. The framework can help you write a role statement that reflects the scope of the role, determine the time and resources the role requires, recruit and induct new educational leaders, and structure regular support conversations. Domain 1 is a useful starting point for clarifying the role, and Domain 10 for understanding what makes it sustainable.

Use the framework descriptively rather than diagnostically. Its purpose is to open a conversation about growth, not to rate a person. It should not be used as a performance-management tool or in a way that turns educational leadership into a compliance exercise.

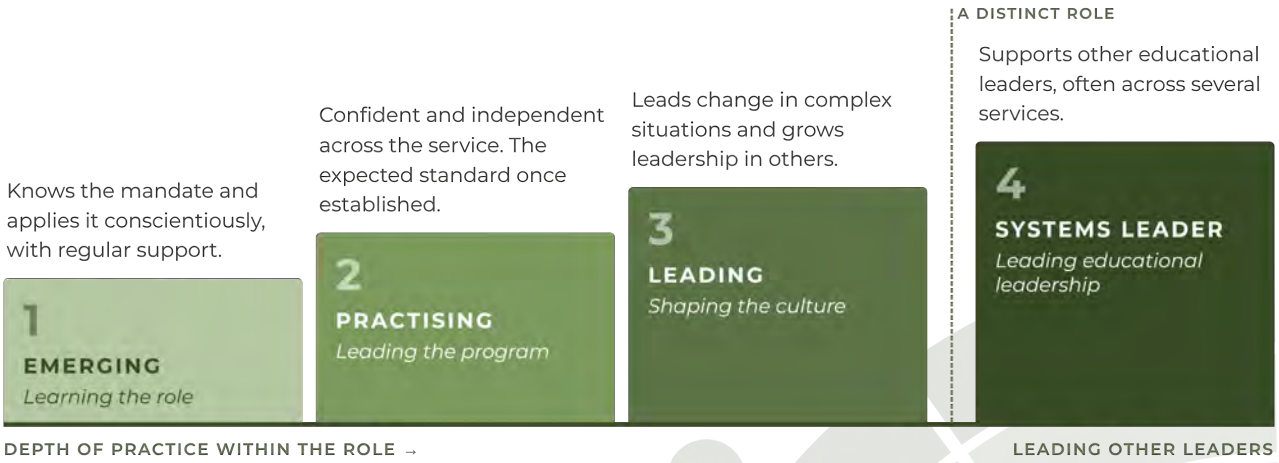
For organisations with multiple services

The framework can support workforce planning, the design of educational leader networks, and the identification of educational leaders ready to support others. The Systems Leader level outlines the capabilities required to lead educational leadership across services.



THE FOUR DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS

The framework outlines educational leadership across four levels. The first three levels describe a growing depth of practice within the role. The fourth level describes a distinct role.



Emerging. An educational leader at the beginning of their practice, or an educator preparing to step into the role. Understands the role's mandate and the approved learning framework. Applies their knowledge conscientiously, sometimes rigidly. Relies on regular support from their nominated supervisor, approved provider or a mentor. Aware of what they do not yet know.

Practising. A confident, independent educational leader. Leads the educational program and the assessment and planning cycle across the service, mentors educators purposefully, and uses critical reflection to drive improvement. Seeks support in complex situations. This is the standard an approved provider can reasonably expect of a designated educational leader once established in the role.

Leading. A highly skilled educational leader whose influence shapes the culture of the service. Leads change in complex or contested situations, builds distributed leadership, and sustains a professional learning community. Mentors other educators into leadership and contributes to professional learning beyond their own service.

Systems Leader. A leader in educational leadership. Supports, mentors or supervises other educational leaders, often across several services or within an organisation. Shapes how the role is designed, resourced and evaluated, and contributes to the wider sector through networks, teaching, writing or policy input.

STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The framework comprises ten domains. Each domain contains three to six competencies, and each competency is described at four developmental levels.

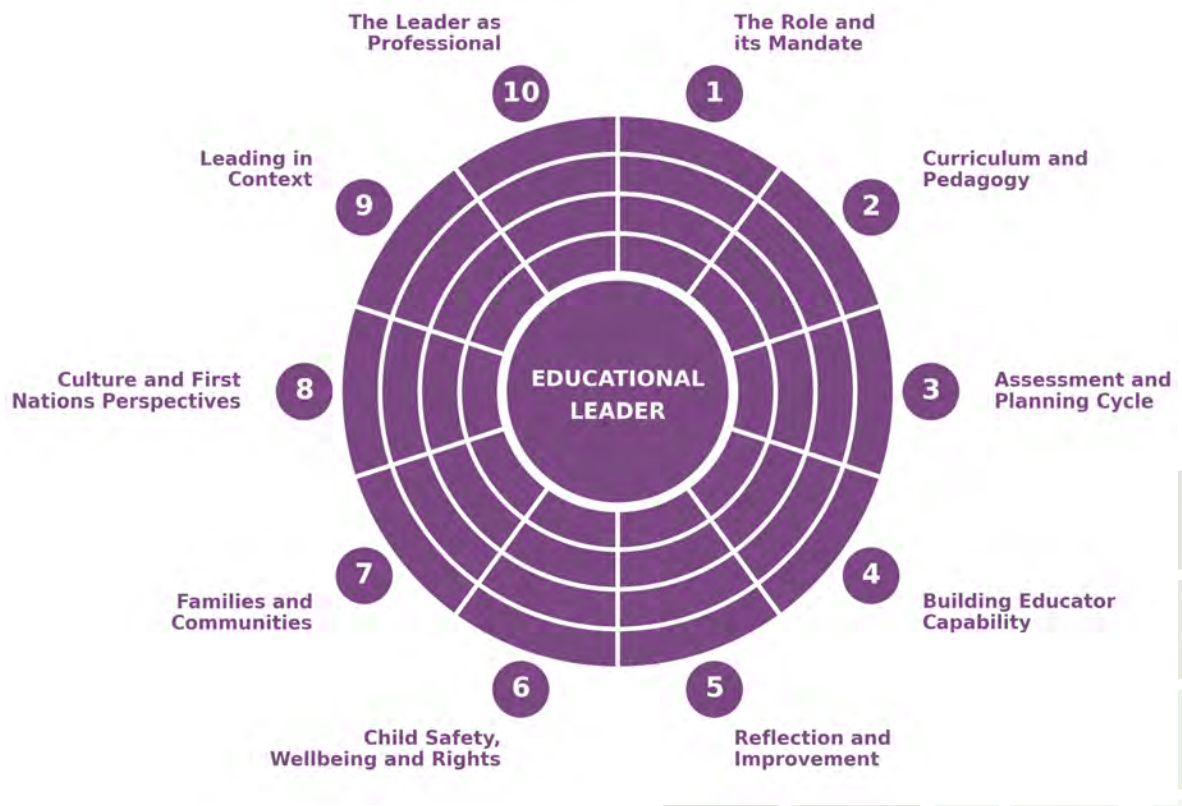


Figure 1. The ten domains of educational leader practice. Each segment is a domain. The four bands within each segment show how practice deepens from Emerging (inner band) to Systems Leader (outer band). The educational leader sits at the centre because every domain describes their practice. On each domain page, a smaller version of this wheel highlights where that domain sits.

Domain 1: Understanding the Role and its Mandate *(Regulation 118; Element 7.2.2)*

Domain 2: Curriculum and Pedagogical Leadership *(Approved learning frameworks; Quality Area 1; Element 7.1.1)*

Domain 3: Leading the Assessment and Planning Cycle *(Element 7.2.2; Standard 1.3; Regulations 73 to 76)*

Domain 4: Building Educator Capability *(Elements 7.2.2 and 7.2.3; Standard 4.2)*

Domain 5: Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement *(Element 1.3.2; Standard 7.2)*

Domain 6: Child Safety, Wellbeing and Rights *(Paramount consideration; Element 2.2.3; Quality Area 7)*

Domain 7: Partnerships with Families and Communities *(Quality Area 6; Element 1.3.3)*

Domain 8: Cultural Responsiveness and First Nations Perspectives *(Approved learning frameworks)*

Domain 9: Leading in Context *(Educational Leader Resource and addenda; My Time, Our Place V2.0)*

Domain 10: The Educational Leader as Professional *(Element 4.2.2; ECA Code of Ethics)*

Each competency is presented in a table with four columns: Emerging, Practising, Leading and Systems Leader. The descriptors are indicative rather than exhaustive.

Each competency is followed by a practice story. The stories are illustrative composites drawn from early childhood services, including long day care, preschool, kindergarten and family day care, as well as outside school hours care. Each story shows an educational leader moving up one level: what they used to do, what they do now, and the change it created for children, educators and families. The stories describe one possible pathway, not the only one.



DOMAIN 1: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND ITS MANDATE



Anchored in Regulations 118 and 148 and in Standard 7.2 and Element 7.2.2 of the National Quality Standard.

This domain covers what an educational leader needs to understand about the role itself before they can enact it well: its legal basis, its scope, how it sits alongside other roles in the service, and how influence works when authority is shared. Because Element 7.2.2 expects the educational leader to be both designated and supported, this domain also includes the relationship between the educational leader and service leadership.

IN THIS DOMAIN

1.1 Understands the regulatory and quality mandate of the role

1.2 Clarifies and negotiates the scope of the role

1.3 Works in partnership with the approved provider and service leadership

1.4 Leads through influence and relationship

Competency 1.1: Understands the regulatory and quality mandate of the role			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows that regulation 118 requires the approved provider to designate an educational leader in writing, and that Element 7.2.2 describes the role as leading the development and implementation of the educational program and the assessment and planning cycle. Can explain the purpose of the role to colleagues in plain language.	Connects the mandate to everyday work, so that their leadership is visible in the program, the planning cycle and educator practice rather than in a title or a folder. Understands what an authorised officer is likely to observe, discuss and sight for Element 7.2.2, and prepares the team without performing for assessment.	Interprets the mandate for their service, philosophy and community, and helps approved providers and colleagues see the role as a lever for improving quality rather than a compliance requirement. Keeps up to date with changes to the National Law, Regulations and NQS, including the 2026 child safety refinements, and translates them for the team.	Shapes how the educational leader role is defined, resourced and evaluated across an organisation or network. Contributes to sector understanding of the role through policy input, writing or presenting.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Priya kept a folder labelled "Educational Leader" in the office of her three-room long day care centre and thought of the role mostly as having that folder ready for assessment and rating. Her leadership was something she explained when asked, rather than something educators saw in their day.

What they do now. She spends her programming time working alongside educators in each room, joins planning conversations and links what she sees to Element 7.2.2 in plain language. When the team asked what an authorised officer might want to see, she walked them through their own planning cycle rather than the folder.

The change it created. Educators now describe the educational leader as someone who works alongside them. The folder still exists, but it holds evidence of real practice, and the team approached their most recent visit calmly rather than performing for it.

Competency 1.2: Clarifies and negotiates the scope of the role			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Holds a written designation and seeks a role statement that describes responsibilities, time allocation and reporting lines. Can distinguish the educational leader role from the nominated supervisor, responsible person, room leader, coordinator and director roles, even when one person holds several of them.	Negotiates protected time, has clear expectations and decision-making authority with the approved provider or nominated supervisor and revisits these when the service changes. Names openly when the role is being absorbed by rostering, compliance or operational tasks, and proposes practical solutions.	Designs the role so that it is sustainable in their context, including where they also hold a teaching, coordination or management role. Helps services with limited resources find workable arrangements, such as shared or distributed models, that still meet the intent of Regulation 118.	Develops role descriptions, workload models and position frameworks for educational leaders across multiple services. Advises approved providers on designing the role for different service types and sizes.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Tom had negotiated two hours a week of protected time at his before and after school care service, but as coordinator he regularly lost it to rosters, casual call-outs and family enquiries. He named the problem at supervision each month, yet the pattern stayed the same.

What they do now. He redesigned the role with his approved provider. A senior educator now handles afternoon rostering, and Tom's educational leader time sits in a set window before the afternoon session, with a shared list of what that time is for. He also helped a small vacation care program nearby develop a shared approach to educational leadership that still meets the intent of regulation 118.

The change it created. The protected time is used for its purpose most weeks, the senior educator is growing as a leader, and the depth of program planning has visibly increased.

Competency 1.3: Works in partnership with the approved provider and service leadership			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands that Element 7.2.2 expects the educational leader to be supported and knows who in the service is responsible for providing that support. Communicates regularly with the nominated supervisor about the program and emerging priorities.	Maintains a purposeful working relationship with the approved provider and nominated supervisor, sharing evidence of program quality and educator growth. Asks for what the role needs (time, professional learning, access to mentoring) and explains why it matters for children.	Influences service decisions so that pedagogical priorities shape budgets, rosters, recruitment and the Quality Improvement Plan. Holds productive conversations when operational and pedagogical priorities pull in different directions.	Works with boards, approved providers and executive teams to build governance structures that protect and value educational leadership. Supports leadership teams to evaluate whether their support for educational leaders is having the intended effect.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Long day care organisation*

What they used to do. As educational leader of one long day care centre, Helen was skilled at influencing her service's budget, rosters and Quality Improvement Plan. Across her organisation, though, each educational leader negotiated support alone, and some had very little.

What they do now. In her new role as pedagogy lead across eight centres, she worked with the executive team to write a governance policy that sets minimum programming time, monthly supervision and a professional learning allocation for every educational leader. She runs a short annual survey asking educational leaders whether that support is making a difference.

The change it created. Support for the role no longer depends on which centre director an educational leader happens to work with. The board now receives a yearly report on educational leadership alongside its financial and compliance reports.

Competency 1.4: Leads through influence and relationship			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Recognises that the role often carries influence without positional authority. Builds trust with educators through reliability, curiosity about their practice and respect for their knowledge. Sometimes avoids difficult conversations to protect relationships.	Leads collegially, positioning educational leadership as a joint endeavour rather than inspection or instruction. Uses relational trust to raise questions about practice directly and warmly and follows through on what has been agreed.	Shifts team thinking and practice where change is resisted or contested, without relying on authority. Recognises the informal leaders in a team and works with them deliberately. Understands their own leadership style and adapts it to the people and the moment.	Mentors educational leaders in the relational work of influence, including leaders who are newer to the sector or less experienced than the educators they lead. Models collaborative leadership across services and organisations.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Jaz was newly designated as educational leader at an after school care service and was younger than most of the team. When she noticed educators standing together chatting at the edge of the oval while children played, she said nothing and hoped it would change on its own.

What they do now. She now raises practice questions directly and warmly, starting with curiosity. She asked the team, "What do the children notice when we stand at the edge of the oval?" and the group agreed to spread out and join games. She checked back a fortnight later, as she had promised.

The change it created. Educators now move through the outdoor space and join children's play. Jaz says her relationships with the team are stronger because the conversation happened, not weaker.

DOMAIN 2: CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP



Anchored in the approved learning frameworks (EYLF V2.0, My Time, Our Place V2.0 and the VEYLDF), Quality Area 1 and Element 7.1.1.

This domain encompasses the knowledge base for the role: deep, usable knowledge of the approved learning frameworks, contemporary theory and evidence, and the pedagogical practices that bring them to life (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2022a, 2022b). An educational leader cannot lead what they do not understand, and this domain describes what that understanding looks like as it deepens.

IN THIS DOMAIN

2.1 Holds deep knowledge of the approved learning frameworks
2.2 Leads intentional, play-based learning
2.3 Leads an inclusive and equitable program
2.4 Grounds the program in theory and evidence
2.5 Connects the program to the service philosophy
2.6 Embeds sustainability in the program

Competency 2.1: Holds deep knowledge of the approved learning frameworks			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows the vision, principles, practices and learning outcomes of the approved learning framework used in the service and can locate relevant sections when supporting educators. Understands the key changes introduced in Version 2.0 of the national frameworks.	Uses the framework as a living reference for conversations, planning and reflection, rather than simply linking codes to documentation. Helps educators understand how the principles and practices connect to their everyday work. In Victoria, understands the updated 2026 VEYLDF and the timeline for services to align with it (Department of Education [Victoria], 2026).	Moves confidently between the national and state frameworks, understanding where they align and differ. Interprets the frameworks critically in the service context and helps teams engage with less familiar principles, such as sustainability, collaborative leadership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Contributes to the interpretation and implementation of the frameworks across organisations or the sector.	Develops resources and professional learning that support others to engage deeply with the frameworks.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Sessional kindergarten (Victoria)*

What they used to do. Sofia knew the EYLF and the VEYLDF well and used them confidently in planning conversations at her kindergarten. However, the team tended to focus on familiar learning outcomes they were already comfortable with, while principles such as sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives received less attention.

What they do now. She mapped where the updated VEYLDF and EYLF V2.0 align and differ for her team, then led a term of conversations exploring one less familiar principle at a time, using the team's own photographs and observations as the starting point.

The change it created. Planning now draws on the principles and practices, not just the outcomes. Educators who once felt sustainability 'wasn't really their thing' are now supporting children to investigate the kindergarten garden.

Competency 2.2: Leads intentional, play-based learning			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands how play-based learning and intentional teaching complement each other and can describe a range of teaching strategies. Recognises when practice becomes either too hands-off or overly directive.	Helps educators make deliberate decisions about when to step in, when to step back and how to extend children's thinking through play. Models intentional teaching in the room or play space and explains the reasoning behind teaching decisions.	Builds a shared understanding of pedagogy across the team, ensuring intentional teaching is consistent across rooms, educators and times of day, including routines and transitions. Leads the team to explore how pedagogical approaches differ for babies, toddlers, preschool and school age children.	Supports leaders across services to build coherent pedagogical approaches. Contributes to professional and public conversations about the value of play-based learning.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. Daniel had built a strong shared understanding of pedagogy at his after school care service, where educators knew when to join play and when to step back. Across the wider organisation, however, intentional teaching in school age care was often understood as running structured activities.

What they do now. As practice lead across twelve OSHC services, he facilitates a network where educational leaders share short clips of their practice and explore the balance between children's leisure and intentional teaching, drawing on My Time, Our Place. He also contributed an article to a sector newsletter on the value of play for older children.

The change it created. Educational leaders across the organisation now share a common language for play-based practice in school age care. Several services have moved away from timetabled activities towards longer periods of child-chosen play, with educators actively engaged alongside children.

Competency 2.3: Leads an inclusive and equitable program			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands the principle of equity, inclusion and high expectations and the service's responsibilities and obligations towards children with disability and additional needs. Knows how to access inclusion support and when to seek specialist advice.	Supports educators to identify and remove barriers to participation so every child can engage meaningfully in the program. Works with families and support professionals to develop individual plans that are integrated into, rather than separate from, the everyday program.	Leads the team to examine how routines, environments, expectations and assumptions can include or exclude children. Builds inclusion into program design rather than responding to individual needs child by child.	Shapes inclusion policy and practice across an organisation. Advocates for the structural supports and partnerships that make inclusion sustainable.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. When an autistic child joined the preschool room, Mei applied for inclusion support and arranged an additional educator. The child's plan was kept in a separate folder, and the additional educator worked with the child away from the group for much of the day.

What they do now. Mei works with the family, the speech pathologist and the team to set goals that are part of the everyday program, such as participating in group time with a visual schedule and helping to set the table for lunch. She supports educators to identify and remove barriers, such as high noise levels in the block area during busy periods.

The change it created. The child now spends most of the day with peers, and educators incorporate the child's goals into everyday planning rather than seeing them as someone else's responsibility.

Competency 2.4: Grounds the program in theory and evidence			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Is familiar with a range of theoretical perspectives on children's learning and development and understands that the frameworks draw on more than one. Reads current professional literature and shares relevant ideas with the team.	Helps educators name the theories that inform their practice and examine them critically. Evaluates research and professional resources for credibility and relevance before introducing them to the team.	Uses theory and evidence to challenge taken-for-granted practices and open new possibilities in the program. Brings current research into team learning in ways that are accessible and usable.	Contributes to the evidence base through practitioner research, writing or presenting. Builds research literacy among educational leaders.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Aroha helped educators at her after school care service name the theories behind their practice, and the team could talk confidently about play and wellbeing. Yet one long-held practice remained untouched: every child did homework club for the first forty minutes, because 'that's what families want'.

What they do now. She brought research on rest, play and wellbeing for school age children, along with children's own views from a short survey, to a team meeting and asked the team to question the assumption. Together they redesigned the start of the session and consulted families about the change.

The change it created. Homework is now an option in a quiet space rather than a requirement. Educators notice children arriving at the service more settled, and families appreciated being asked.

Competency 2.5: Connects the program to the service philosophy			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows the service philosophy and can explain how it relates to the educational program. Notices where practice and philosophy are not aligned.	Uses the philosophy as a reference point when making pedagogical decisions and evaluating the program. Involves educators, families and children in reviewing the philosophy so that it reflects the service as it is and as it aspires to be.	Leads philosophy review as a genuine process of critical reflection rather than a wording exercise. Ensures the philosophy guides decision-making across the service, consistent with Element 7.1.1.	Supports organisations to develop philosophies that are shared across services and responsive to each local community.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Community preschools*

What they used to do. Fiona had led a genuine philosophy review at her community preschool, involving children, families and educators, and the philosophy guided decisions about everything from daily rhythms to excursions.

What they do now. As quality lead for a not-for-profit with six preschools, she supported each service to develop its own philosophy from a shared set of organisational values, with local community voices at the centre, rather than sending out one statement for every site.

The change it created. Each philosophy now sounds like its own community, and directors refer to them when making decisions. The organisation's values are recognisable in all six without the philosophies being identical.

Competency 2.6: Embeds sustainability in the program			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands sustainability as a principle of the approved learning frameworks, with environmental, social and economic dimensions. Supports everyday sustainable practices in the service.	Helps educators embed sustainability in the program in ways that build children's agency and their understanding of their connection to the natural and social world, rather than as isolated activities.	Leads a whole-service approach to sustainability that involves children, families and community, and connects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings of Country where this is done respectfully and in partnership.	Contributes to organisational and sector approaches to education for sustainability.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Marcus supported sustainable practices in his after school program, such as sorting recycling and switching off lights, but these were rules adults enforced rather than something children owned.

What they do now. He now helps educators hand real problems over to children. A group of Year 5 and 6 children audited food waste from afternoon tea, presented their findings to the team and designed a compost system with the school's garden club.

The change it created. Children now lead sustainability decisions in the service, younger children are learning from older ones, and afternoon tea waste has dropped noticeably.

DOMAIN 3: LEADING THE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING CYCLE



Anchored in Element 7.2.2, Standard 1.3 (Elements 1.3.1 and 1.3.3) and regulations 73 to 76.

This domain covers the core technical work of the role: leading an ongoing cycle of observing, analysing, planning, implementing and reflecting that keeps the program responsive to every child, and evaluating the program as a whole (ACECQA, n.d.). It is also where the role most often gets lost in paperwork, so purposeful documentation is described here as a competency in its own right.

IN THIS DOMAIN

3.1 Leads the assessment and planning cycle across the service

3.2 Supports purposeful and meaningful documentation

3.3 Evaluates the program as a whole

3.4 Supports continuity of learning and transitions

Competency 3.1: Leads the assessment and planning cycle across the service			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands each stage of the assessment and planning cycle and supports educators to apply it when planning for individual children or small groups.	Understands the regulatory requirements for documenting and evaluating children's learning and development. Works alongside educators to lead a consistent, manageable assessment and planning cycle across rooms, ensuring children's learning informs future planning. Supports educators to analyse observations, identify children's learning and connect it to the EYLF principles, practices and learning outcomes, rather than simply describing activities. Ensures assessment and planning reflect the learning and development of individual children, groups and the overall program. Keeps planning and documentation processes practical, manageable and suited to the service, allowing educators to spend more time engaging with children.	Develops practical planning systems and guidance across multiple services, ensuring they support quality practice without creating unnecessary workload.	Builds a shared understanding across services of what an effective assessment and planning cycle looks like in practice.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Leah led a consistent planning cycle across five rooms, and educators analysed their observations well. But the cycle focused almost entirely on individual children, room programs read as a collection of separate goals, and educators did much of the writing in their own time.

What they do now. She reworked the cycle so each room holds a fortnightly reflection on group learning and the whole service shares a focus each term, while individual observations are fewer and more purposeful. Planning now happens in rostered non-contact time, using a template the team designed together.

The change it created. Educators spend less time writing and more time with children, and the program reads as a coherent whole rather than a list of separate goals.

Competency 3.2: Supports purposeful and meaningful documentation			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands that documentation should be meaningful and useful for children, families and educators, with a focus on quality rather than quantity.	Supports educators to meet documentation requirements clearly, accurately and efficiently. Supports educators to choose documentation methods that suit the purpose and audience, such as floor books, learning stories, photographs, children's work and educator reflections. Challenges myths about what authorised officers require and helps the team reduce documentation that does not serve children, their experience or their learning outcomes.	Supports educators to use documentation to reflect on children's learning, guide future planning and make learning visible, including the perspectives of children and families.	Ensures documentation practices meet child safety requirements, particularly when using images and digital devices. Shapes organisational expectations to ensure documentation is purposeful, ethical and manageable for educators. Contributes to sector discussions about creating realistic documentation expectations that support educator wellbeing while maintaining quality practice.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. At his own after school care service, Sam had led the team to use documentation as a tool for thinking, including a floor book that children wrote and drew in. Other services in the organisation were producing daily photo-heavy reports for families because educators believed that was what assessment required.

What they do now. As a regional educational leader across nine services, Sam worked with the operations manager to replace the daily report requirement with a guide to purposeful documentation in school age care, including child safe practices for images and devices.

The change it created. Educators across the region now spend less time on screens, children's own voices appear in documentation, and fewer images of children are being taken and stored.

Competency 3.3: Evaluates the program as a whole			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands the difference between assessing children's individual learning and evaluating how well the educational program supports their learning and development. Begins to gather evidence and reflect on what is working well and what could be improved.	Leads regular evaluation of the overall program, using children's learning, educator reflections and feedback from children and families to identify strengths and areas for improvement.	Uses evaluation findings to guide ongoing improvements and inform the Quality Improvement Plan. Uses a range of evidence to evaluate how well the program supports the learning and development of all children, including those whose learning may be less easily recognised. Uses critical reflection and evaluation findings to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Supports educational leaders across services to meaningfully evaluate their programs, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.	Uses insights from across services to guide organisational priorities and continuous improvement.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Preschool*

What they used to do. Grace believed that if every child at her preschool had up-to-date learning records, the program must be working well. She had not yet separated assessing children's learning from evaluating the program as a whole.

What they do now. Each term she now leads a whole-program evaluation that brings together children's learning, educator reflections and a short family feedback form, asking what is working, for whom, and what is missing. The findings go straight into the Quality Improvement Plan.

The change it created. The team discovered that the outdoor program offered little for children who preferred quieter play and redesigned part of the yard. The Quality Improvement Plan now reflects what is actually happening in the program.

Competency 3.4: Supports continuity of learning and transitions			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the importance of transitions within the service, between services and into school. Supports educators to share information with families and schools appropriately.	Leads consistent and thoughtful approaches to transitions, supporting children's sense of belonging, wellbeing and continuity of learning, including transition statements where relevant.	In outside school hours care, builds connections between the school day and the OSHC program to support children's experiences. Builds reciprocal relationships with schools and other services so that children's learning is understood and valued across settings. Uses tools such as the VEYLDF Learning and Development Maps, where relevant, to support continuity.	Contributes to local and regional networks that strengthen continuity between early childhood services, school age care and schools.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Ruby ran a planned orientation for new Foundation children at her after school care service each January and met regularly with school staff to stay connected with the school day. Information, however, mostly flowed one way, from the service to the school.

What they do now. She has built reciprocal relationships with the Foundation teachers and with two local early childhood services. With family consent, transition statements now inform the after school program, and OSHC educators share what they notice about children's interests and wellbeing with teachers.

The change it created. Children starting school see familiar faces and play ideas carried across settings, and teachers now invite OSHC educators to transition meetings.



DOMAIN 4: BUILDING EDUCATOR CAPABILITY



Anchored in Elements 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 and Standard 4.2.

This domain concerns how the educational leader develops others' practice. Mentoring, coaching, feedback and professional learning are the main tools of the role, and they need to be applied with skill. Each of these is a practice that the educational leader can study, rehearse and refine over time.

IN THIS DOMAIN

4.1 Mentors and coaches educators

4.2 Observes practice and offers feedback that grows practice

4.3 Designs and leads professional learning

4.4 Supports educators across qualifications and career stages

4.5 Builds distributed and collaborative leadership

Competency 4.1: Mentors and coaches educators			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands the difference between mentoring, coaching, supervising and instructing, and uses each intentionally. Holds regular conversations with educators about their practice, asking open questions and listening for understanding.	Uses a coaching approach so that educators develop their own solutions and ownership of their practice, while offering knowledge when it is needed. Sustains mentoring relationships over time and connects them to individual and service goals.	Adapts mentoring and coaching to educators' qualifications, experience, career stage and culture. Works skilfully with educators who are reluctant, defensive or struggling. Seeks feedback on their own mentoring and coaching practice.	Mentors and coaches other educational leaders and supports them to develop their own coaching practice. Holds a well-developed coaching practice of their own.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Long day care organisation*

What they used to do. Anh was a highly skilled coach in her own long day care centre, adapting her approach to each educator, including those who were reluctant or struggling. Other educational leaders in her organisation mostly gave advice and instructions, and many felt worn out by it.

What they do now. Anh now mentors six educational leaders across the organisation and runs coaching practice sessions where they rehearse open questions and listening, then bring real conversations to discuss and also to debrief. She also receives senior coaching supervision herself.

The change it created. Educational leaders report that educators are taking greater ownership of their practice, creating a stronger sense of shared responsibility across teams. Leaders feel more supported and less responsible for carrying everything themselves. This coaching approach is now embedded in the induction of every new educational leader across the organisation.

Competency 4.2: Observes practice and offers feedback that grows practice			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Observes educators' interactions and practice with a clear purpose, focusing on what children are experiencing. Gives specific, respectful feedback that names strengths as well as areas for growth.	Agrees the focus of observation with educators beforehand and uses feedback conversations to build reflection rather than compliance. Follows up so that feedback leads to change.	Builds a team culture in which educators invite observation and peer feedback. Distinguishes developmental feedback from performance management and holds that boundary clearly.	Develops observation and feedback approaches for use across services. Supports educational leaders to give feedback in complex or contested situations.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Josh observed educators at his after school care service and gave kind, specific feedback, but he usually chose what to observe himself and rarely followed up. Educators were polite, but practice did not change much.

What they do now. Before observing, he now agrees a focus with each educator, such as how they support children to resolve disputes during games. Afterwards he asks the educator what they noticed first, they agree one thing to try, and he checks back two weeks later.

The change it created. Educators now ask Josh to watch particular parts of the afternoon, and feedback conversations are leading to changes the children can see.

Competency 4.3: Designs and leads professional learning			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Identifies educators' professional learning needs through observations, conversations and reflection, and shares relevant learning opportunities with the team.	Uses team meetings to encourage meaningful discussions, shared learning and reflection on practice, alongside administrative matters. Designs a professional learning plan for the service that connects individual goals, team priorities and the Quality Improvement Plan. Facilitates engaging learning sessions and supports educators to apply what they have learned.	Uses a range of professional learning approaches, including collaborative inquiry, peer observations, shared learning and external expertise. Evaluates how professional learning strengthens educator practice and improves outcomes for children. Develops and leads meaningful professional learning opportunities for educational leaders and teams across services, supporting growth and continuous improvement.	Shares knowledge and expertise to contribute to professional learning across the broader early childhood sector.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Rebecca had a professional learning plan linked to the Quality Improvement Plan and delivered engaging sessions at staff meetings. However, most learning was led by her, and she was unsure whether it was making a difference to, or changed, educator practice.

What they do now. Rebecca now uses a range of professional learning approaches, including ongoing inquiry into outdoor risky play, peer observations between rooms and external expertise. She evaluates their effectiveness by looking at how learning influences educator practice and children's experiences, rather than simply whether educators enjoyed the sessions.

The change it created. Educators now take a more active role in leading team learning. Rebecca can identify clear changes in practice, including children having more opportunities to use real tools, climb and engage in appropriate risk-taking, as a direct result of professional learning.

Competency 4.4: Supports educators across qualifications and career stages			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Understands the different qualifications, roles and responsibilities of team members, including early childhood teachers, diploma and certificate III qualified educators, students, school age care educators from a range of backgrounds, and volunteers. Supports new teachers, educators and team members through effective induction and guidance.	Tailors support to each educator's qualifications, experience and goals. Supports early childhood teachers, in jurisdictions where teacher registration applies, to gain and maintain registration against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). Treats students and trainees as part of the team's learning.	Builds growth opportunities and pathways in the service, including for educators returning to work, changing roles or moving into leadership. Recognises and responds to the workforce pressures that shape educators' capacity to grow.	Contributes to organisational workforce strategy, induction frameworks and career pathways for teachers, educators and educational leaders.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. In his own after school care service, Imran built growth pathways for casual university students and parents returning to work, and several became senior educators. He understood how high turnover and split shifts shaped what educators could take on.

What they do now. As a workforce and practice leader across a large OSHC provider, Imran co-designed an induction framework for new educators and a pathway from casual educator to educational leader, including mentoring and support for study.

The change it created. More educational leaders are now being grown from within the organisation, and new educators receive the same quality of induction, whichever service they join.

Competency 4.5: Builds distributed and collaborative leadership			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Recognises leadership strengths in educators and invites them to share their expertise. Understands collaborative leadership and teamwork as a principle of the approved learning frameworks.	Distributes pedagogical leadership deliberately, for example, through room leaders, senior educators, pedagogical champions or project leads, and supports those educators in their leadership.	Builds a team in which pedagogical leadership is shared and sustained, so that quality does not depend on the educational leader alone. Plans for succession to ensure continuity of pedagogical leadership.	Designs distributed leadership models across services and develops the next generation of educational leaders.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Chloe noticed that one educator in the toddler room was skilled with music and another with nature play, and she invited them to share ideas at staff meetings. Beyond that, she held all pedagogical leadership herself.

What they do now. She has set up pedagogical champions for music, outdoor learning and inclusion. Each champion has a small focus for the term, ten minutes at every staff meeting and a monthly check-in with Chloe.

The change it created. Ideas now travel between rooms without going through Chloe, and educators see leadership as something they can grow into.

DOMAIN 5: CRITICAL REFLECTION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Anchored in Element 1.3.2, Standard 7.2 (Elements 7.2.1 and 7.2.2), Regulation 55 and the critical reflection principle of the approved learning frameworks.

This domain covers the culture of inquiry that the educational leader builds. Critical reflection is how a team examines its practice, assumptions and impact, and continuous improvement is how that reflection translates into action. Standard 7.2 asks for a positive organisational culture and a professional learning community, and the educational leader is central to both.

IN THIS DOMAIN

5.1 Practises critical reflection
5.2 Leads critical reflection with teams
5.3 Builds a professional learning community
5.4 Leads inquiry into practice
5.5 Contributes to self-assessment and quality improvement

Competency 5.1: Practises critical reflection			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the difference between reflection and critical reflection and regularly reflects on their own practice and leadership. Uses reflective questions from the approved learning frameworks and develops their own questions to prompt deeper thinking.	Examines their own assumptions, values and theories and how these shape their leadership. Considers multiple perspectives, including questions of power, equity and culture.	Models critical reflection openly, including sharing uncertainty, mistakes and changes in their thinking. Uses critical reflection to inform significant decisions about the program and the service.	Supports educational leaders to deepen their critical reflection on their leadership. Contributes to sector understanding of critical reflection.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Ben examined his own assumptions privately. He had realised, for example, that he tended to see older boys' loud, physical play as a problem to manage, but his team rarely saw that thinking.

What they do now. He now models critical reflection openly. At a team meeting he described how his view of the boys' play had changed and what he had got wrong. He then invited the team to look at what kinds of play they most intervened in. By unpacking everyone's comments about the types of play they had to watch more closely, they realised children needed space, and they needed to rethink how the school hall is used.

The change it created. Educators share their own uncertainties more readily, and the hall is now available for active games every afternoon rather than only on wet days, which has had a positive effect on children's behaviour.

Competency 5.2: Leads critical reflection with teams

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Facilitates reflective discussion in team meetings and supports educators to critically reflect on their practice. Creates opportunities for educators to share ideas and questions.	Leads regular, structured critical reflection that goes beyond describing what happened to asking how, why, for whom, and with what effect. Ensures reflection leads to agreed changes in practice.	Builds a team culture in which critical reflection is part of everyday practice and educators question practice safely and constructively. Invites and includes children's and families' perspectives in reflection and in discussions.	Develops approaches and resources for critical reflection that can be used across services and community.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Early learning organisation*

What they used to do. Natalie had built a team where critical reflection was part of everyday practice, including children's and families' perspectives. Other educational leaders asked how she did it, but she had little to share beyond 'we just talk'.

What they do now. As a pedagogical consultant across ten early learning services, Natalie has developed a simple set of critical reflection protocols, prompts and worked examples that leaders can use in team meetings. She trials each one with leaders and refines it before it is shared.

The change it created. Team reflection across the services has moved from describing what happened to asking why, how and for whom, and the protocols are now part of the organisation's practice guide.

Competency 5.3: Builds a professional learning community

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands Standard 7.2 and the idea of a professional learning community. Encourages educators to learn from and with each other.	Builds a team culture of shared learning, curiosity and professional dialogue. Connects the team to external networks and learning communities.	Sustains a professional learning community through staff changes and periods of pressure. Builds the psychological safety that allows educators to take risks and learn from mistakes.	Creates networks of educational leaders and professional learning communities across services.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Olivia encouraged educators at her after school care service to learn from each other, but staff meetings were mostly about rosters and incident forms, and educators who worked different shifts rarely spoke to one another.

What they do now. She set up a fifteen-minute 'practice share' at the start of each meeting, and a shared space where educators post an idea that worked, with no identifiable images of children. She also connected the team to a local OSHC educators' network.

The change it created. Educators across shifts now know each other and use each other's ideas, and two educators attend the local network regularly and bring their learning back.

Competency 5.4: Leads inquiry into practice

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Supports educators to ask questions about their practice and children's learning. Understands inquiry as a way of learning for adults as well as children.	Leads small-scale inquiry with educators, children and families, gathering and analysing evidence to inform change. Uses tools such as floor books and project documentation to make inquiry visible.	Builds inquiry into the service's approach to improvement. Shares findings with children, families, colleagues and the wider community.	Supports practitioner research across services and contributes to the sector's knowledge.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Preschool*

What they used to do. Hannah led small inquiries with educators at her preschool, such as using a floor book to follow children's theories about shadows. These were rich and visible within the room but stayed there.

What they do now. She has built inquiry into the service's approach to improvement. Each year the team chooses one inquiry question linked to the Quality Improvement Plan, gathers evidence across the year and shares its findings with families at an evening event and with a local educators' network.

The change it created. Inquiry is now how the service improves, not an occasional project, and educators from other services have visited to learn from it.

Competency 5.5: Contributes to self-assessment and quality improvement

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the purpose of self-assessment and the Quality Improvement Plan. Contributes to identifying strengths and areas for improvement in Quality Area 1.	Leads the educational program aspects of self-assessment and the Quality Improvement Plan, using evidence to set priorities and monitor progress. Involves educators, families and children in the process.	Ensures the Quality Improvement Plan is a living document that drives improvement across quality areas, and that improvement is evident in practice and in children's experiences.	Supports organisations to build effective quality improvement systems and contributes to sector understanding of continuous improvement.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. At his own service, Leon kept the Quality Improvement Plan as a living document that drove improvement across all seven quality areas. At other sites in the organisation, the plan was updated in a rush before assessment and rating.

What they do now. As quality and practice manager across fourteen OSHC services, Leon introduced a simple quarterly review in which coordinators and educational leaders bring evidence of progress, including children's and families feedback. He has also presented at a state OSHC conference on continuous improvement in school age care.

The change it created. Quality Improvement Plans across the organisation are now reviewed regularly, and improvement priorities are shaped by what children, families and the team say about their service.

DOMAIN 6: CHILD SAFETY, WELLBEING AND RIGHTS



Anchored in the paramount consideration requirement of the National Law, Element 2.2.3 (Child safety and protection), the 2026 refinements to Quality Area 7, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This domain addresses the educational leader's role in ensuring the educational program is child safe and rights-based. From 27 February 2026, the National Law requires that children's safety, rights and best interests be the paramount consideration when operating an education and care service. Child protection and child safety training became mandatory for everyone working in the sector (ACECQA, 2026). Child safety is not separate from pedagogy; it is woven through relationships, environments, routines and the curriculum.

IN THIS DOMAIN

6.1 Embeds children's safety, rights and best interests in the program

6.2 Leads safe and ethical use of digital technologies and images

6.3 Supports children's agency, voice and participation

6.4 Leads relational, trauma-aware practice for wellbeing

Competency 6.1: Embeds children's safety, rights and best interests in the program

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the paramount consideration requirement, the service's child safe policies and procedures, and their own child protection obligations, including reporting obligations in their jurisdiction. Has completed the required child protection and child safety training.	Ensures child safety is visible in pedagogical decisions, from supervision arrangements and environments to intimate care routines and relationships. Supports educators to understand child safety as part of quality practice rather than a separate compliance area.	Leads the team to examine practices that could place children at risk, including transitions, routines and less visible spaces. Works with the nominated supervisor and approved provider so that child safety is embedded in both governance and practice.	Contributes to organisational child safe culture and governance. Supports educational leaders across services to lead child safety through pedagogy.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Ella knew her child protection obligations and had completed the required training, but she saw child safety as the nominated supervisor's area, sitting separately from the educational program.

What they do now. Ella now leads conversations about how child safety shows up in pedagogy. How nappy change and toileting routines respect children's dignity while remaining visible to other educators. How sleep and rest are supervised, and how environments offer clear lines of sight as well as cosy spaces.

The change it created. Educators talk about child safety as part of quality practice, and the team redesigned the nappy change area so it is respectful for children and visible to colleagues.

Competency 6.2: Leads safe and ethical use of digital technologies and images			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Knows the service's policies and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments, including requirements for devices and for taking, using and storing images of children. Follows them consistently.	Supports educators to make ethical decisions about documentation, images and digital tools, including seeking children's consent and respecting families' wishes. Ensures documentation practices meet the requirements in force from 2025 and 2026 (ACECQA, 2025, 2026).	Leads critical reflection on the use of technology with and about children. Supports children to build digital literacy and an understanding of online safety appropriate to their age.	Contributes to organisational policies and sector guidance on digital technologies, images and documentation.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Tahlia made sure educators followed the policy on taking images of children and using service devices. Educator's sought children's consent before taking photographs and respected families' wishes. Children themselves were rarely part of conversations about technology.

What they do now. She now leads critical reflection with the team and the children about how and why technology is used with and about children. With the children, educators co-designed agreements for using the service tablets, including what to do if something online feels wrong.

The change it created. Children understand and help uphold the agreements, older children support younger ones, and educators take far fewer photographs, each with a clearer purpose.

Competency 6.3: Supports children's agency, voice and participation

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands children's rights and agency as reflected in the approved learning frameworks and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Supports educators to listen to children and respond to their ideas.	Builds children's participation into the program, planning and decision-making in ways that suit their age and capacity. Supports learning about body autonomy, consent and protective behaviours as part of everyday practice.	Leads the team to examine how power operates between adults and children, and to recognise their mandated responsibilities to act on what children communicate, including through behaviour and non-verbal means.	Contributes to organisational and sector practice that promotes children's rights and participation.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Early learning organisation*

What they used to do. In her own long day care centre, Rosa led the team to examine how power operates between adults and children, including how educators responded to what babies communicated through crying, turning away and reaching out.

What they do now. As the practice leader across several services, Rosa worked with her organisation to build children's views about routines and spaces into each service's self-assessment. She also co-presented at a regional forum on rights-based practice with infants and toddlers.

The change it created. Children's perspectives now appear in each service's planning and quality improvement, and leaders across the organisation talk about children's rights as part of everyday practice.

Competency 6.4: Leads relational, trauma-aware practice for wellbeing

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the importance of secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships for children's wellbeing and learning. Recognises signs that a child may be experiencing distress or trauma and knows how to seek advice.	Supports educators to use relational, trauma-aware approaches to behaviour guidance and emotional regulation. Works with families and support professionals to support children's wellbeing.	Leads a whole-service approach to wellbeing that includes educators, recognising the emotional labour of the work. Distinguishes trauma-aware practice from therapy and refers appropriately.	Supports organisations to build trauma-aware, wellbeing-focused cultures and structures.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Will recognised that one child's frequent outbursts at pick-up time might signal distress, and he spoke to his coordinator. Educators, however, responded mostly with time out and loss of privileges.

What they do now. Will now supports educators to use relational, trauma-aware approaches: a calm, consistent adult at pick-up, a predictable end-of-day routine and a quiet space the child can choose to go to. With the family's consent, he works with the school's wellbeing staff, so the approach is consistent across the day.

The change it created. The outbursts are less frequent, the family feels part of the solution, and educators have begun using the same approach with other children.



DOMAIN 7: PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



Anchored in Quality Area 6, Element 1.3.3 and regulations 75 and 76.

This domain covers how the educational leader makes the program visible and meaningful to families, and how they engage families and the community in children's learning. Partnerships are a principle of the approved learning frameworks, and the educational leader sets the tone for how the whole team enacts this principle.

IN THIS DOMAIN

7.1 Makes the program visible and meaningful to families

7.2 Builds partnerships with families in children's learning

7.3 Collaborates with community, schools and support professionals

Competency 7.1: Makes the program visible and meaningful to families			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Ensures information about the educational program and each child's learning is available to families as required. Communicates clearly and respectfully.	Supports educators to communicate children's learning in ways that are accessible, meaningful and responsive to families' languages, cultures and preferences. Explains the value of play-based learning to families with confidence.	Builds two-way communication so that families contribute to, not only receive, information about the program. Navigates differing family expectations about learning respectfully.	Develops organisational approaches to family communication and engagement.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Kindergarten*

What they used to do. Lucy supported educators at her kindergarten to share children's learning in ways that suited families, including translated summaries and short videos, and she explained the value of play confidently at orientation. Communication, though, went mainly from the kindergarten to families.

What they do now. She has built two-way communication. Families now add their own observations from home to children's learning records, and a group of families who wanted more 'school readiness' worksheets were invited to see the literacy and numeracy in the play program and to help shape a family information session.

The change it created. Families who once questioned play-based learning now explain it to new families, and educators plan with families' contributions in mind.

Competency 7.2: Builds partnerships with families in children's learning

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Values families as children's first and most important teachers. Invites families to share knowledge about their children.	Supports educators to incorporate families' knowledge, goals and cultures into planning. Builds trusting relationships with families, including those who are less visible in the service.	Leads the service to develop genuine partnerships with families that shape the program and the philosophy. Supports educators in sensitive or difficult conversations with families.	Contributes to organisational and sector understanding of partnerships with families.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. Kemal had led his after school care service to develop genuine partnerships with families, including a family advisory group that helped shape the program and the philosophy.

What they do now. As a senior practice leader across an OSHC network, he developed an organisational approach to family partnerships in school age care that recognises families often have only a few minutes at pick-up. He also wrote an article for a sector publication on partnerships with families in OSHC.

The change it created. Services across the network now use short pick-up conversations, family surveys co-designed with children and occasional family events to shape their programs, and family engagement is reported to the board.

Competency 7.3: Collaborates with community, schools and support professionals			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows the community services, inclusion supports and schools connected to the service. Supports educators to access relevant services and expertise.	Builds collaborative relationships with schools, allied health professionals, inclusion agencies and community organisations to support children's learning and wellbeing.	Positions the service as an active part of its community, building partnerships that enrich the program and support families.	Leads or contributes to community and regional networks and partnerships.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Isla knew which inclusion agencies, allied health providers and schools were connected to her centre, and she helped educators make referrals. Contact with them happened mostly through forms and phone messages.

What they do now. She has built working relationships with the local speech pathologist, the inclusion agency and the two nearby primary schools. The speech pathologist now visits rooms to model strategies with educators, and Foundation teachers visit before children start school.

The change it created. Children receive more consistent support, educators feel more confident, and local professionals see the centre as a partner rather than a referral point.

DOMAIN 8: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AND FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES



Anchored in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, respect for diversity, and equity, inclusion and high expectations principles of the approved learning frameworks.

This domain addresses the educational leader's responsibility to lead culturally safe and responsive practice for every child, family and educator. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with integrity requires relationships, humility and an understanding of where cultural authority resides. Resources or displays alone cannot achieve this.

IN THIS DOMAIN

- **8.1** Embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with integrity
- **8.2** Leads culturally responsive practice
- **8.3** Examines bias and works for equity

Competency 8.1: Embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with integrity			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows that the service operates on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land and whose Country it is. Has undertaken foundational cultural learning. Recognises the difference between tokenistic and meaningful practice.	Supports educators to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in everyday practice, guided by local community and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and organisations. Maintains a clear distinction between leading the practice and holding cultural authority over its content.	Builds sustained, reciprocal relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, on their terms. Leads the service to examine its practices, environments and assumptions, including through a Reconciliation Action Plan where one is in place.	Supports organisations to build culturally safe services. Maintains their own ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and Elders. Models lifelong learning rather than claiming cultural expertise they do not hold.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Ashleigh supported educators at her after school care service to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, guided by an Aboriginal educator at the school. Ashleigh was clear that cultural authority sat with community. Contact with community, though, depended on goodwill and happened when the service needed something.

What they do now. She has built a sustained relationship with the local Aboriginal community-controlled organisation on its terms, including attending community events, paying community members for their time and expertise, and asking what the service can offer in return. The service now has a Reconciliation Action Plan developed with children, families and community.

The change it created. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families see themselves reflected in the service, the relationship continues through staff changes, and educators examine their practice with community guidance rather than relying on resources alone.

Competency 8.2: Leads culturally responsive practice			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Recognises the cultural and linguistic diversity of the children, families and educators in the service. Supports educators to learn about and respect each family's culture.	Supports educators to reflect children's cultures, languages and identities in the program and environment. Values and supports bilingual and multilingual children and educators.	Leads the team to examine cultural assumptions in practice, including their own, and builds an inclusive culture for children, families and educators.	Contributes to organisational and sector practice in cultural responsiveness.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Early learning organisation*

What they used to do. In her culturally diverse long day care centre, Farah led the team to examine its cultural assumptions, including expectations about mealtimes, sleep and independence, building a culture where children's home languages were valued.

What they do now. As cultural responsiveness leader for her organisation, Farah supports services to examine their own practices and has written organisational guidance on supporting bilingual and multilingual children and educators. She shares this work through a sector community of practice.

The change it created. Services across the organisation now actively recruit and value bilingual educators, and families say their cultures are respected in everyday routines.

Competency 8.3: Examines bias and works for equity			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Recognises that bias and assumptions influence practice. Begins to notice their own and invites feedback.	Supports educators to identify and challenge bias in practice, resources and expectations, including in relation to gender, culture, disability and family structure.	Leads the service to address systemic barriers to equity, using evidence to identify children who may be disadvantaged by current practice.	Contributes to organisational and sector work on equity and anti-bias practice.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Noah had begun to notice his own assumptions, for example that girls would prefer craft and boys would want the basketball court, and he asked a colleague to point out when he made these assumptions.

What they do now. He now supports educators to identify bias in practice and resources. The team reviewed who used the court, which books were on the shelves, and which families were represented in program materials. After conversations with the children and whole team, they changed how activities were offered and named.

The change it created. More girls now use the basketball court, children from diverse family structures see themselves in the service's books, and educators question assumptions together with children and in team meetings to challenge bias when they see it.



DOMAIN 9: LEADING IN CONTEXT



Anchored in The Educational Leader Resource and its family day care and outside school hours care addenda (ACECQA, 2019), and My Time, Our Place V2.0.

The educational leader role looks different across a large, long day care centre, a sessional kindergarten, a family day care service and an outside school hours care program. This domain describes how the leader adapts their practice to the setting, so they enact the role with integrity rather than importing it unchanged from elsewhere.

IN THIS DOMAIN

9.1 Leads in long day care, preschool and kindergarten settings
9.2 Leads in family day care
9.3 Leads in outside school hours care
9.4 Adapts to the service's size, location and community

Competency 9.1: Leads in long day care, preschool and kindergarten settings			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the structure and rhythms of their service type, including rostering, room arrangements, sessional programs and age groupings, and how these shape opportunities for educational leadership.	Adapts leadership to the realities of the setting, such as shift patterns in long day care or limited non-contact time in sessional programs. Supports consistency across rooms and teams.	Works skilfully in large, multi-room services and in small services where the educational leader holds several roles. Understands how state-funded preschool and kindergarten programs interact with the educational program.	Supports educational leaders across diverse centre-based settings.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Long day care with funded kindergarten*

What they used to do. Sophie adapted her leadership well to long day care, working around shift patterns and supporting consistency across rooms. When the centre grew to eight rooms and she also became assistant director, she struggled to reach every team.

What they do now. She now works through a pedagogical leadership group of room leaders that meets fortnightly. Sophie also understands how the funded kindergarten program in the two preschool rooms interacts with the broader educational program and makes sure the two work together.

The change it created. Consistency across eight rooms has improved without Sophie needing to be everywhere, and the funded kindergarten program is now integrated rather than run as a separate stream.

Competency 9.2: Leads in family day care

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the family day care model, including the roles of the approved provider, coordinators and educators working in their own homes, and the particular challenges for educational leadership when educators work alone.	Supports educators through home visits, playgroups, networks and remote communication. Builds relationships with educators who may have limited contact with colleagues.	Builds a learning community across a dispersed workforce, using varied approaches to mentoring and professional learning. Supports coordinators in their pedagogical role.	Contributes to the development of educational leadership in family day care across services and the sector.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Family day care*

What they used to do. Diane had built a strong learning community across forty family day care educators working in their own homes. Through playgroups, small networks and online catch-ups, she supported coordinators in their pedagogical role.

What they do now. She now supports educational leaders across several family day care services through a state network, sharing approaches to mentoring educators who work alone, and contributed to a sector resource on educational leadership in family day care.

The change it created. Family day care educational leaders who once felt isolated now have a network where they share ideas and adapt approaches that have worked in Diane's service.

Competency 9.3: Leads in outside school hours care

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands My Time, Our Place V2.0 and the distinctive nature of school age care, including children's leisure, play and agency. Understands the relationship between the service and the school.	Supports educators to plan for school age children in ways that respect their interests, choices and need for rest and play. Works with the school community to support children's wellbeing and continuity.	Builds a program that reflects children's voices across a wide age range. Leads a team that may include casual, part-time and student educators with varied backgrounds and qualifications.	Supports educational leaders across school age care services.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Zoe understood My Time, Our Place and the importance of children's leisure and agency, but the program at her after school care service was planned by adults each week and children chose from what was offered.

What they do now. She now supports educators to plan with children. A weekly children's meeting shapes the program, and educators make sure there is space to rest, or to do nothing in particular, after a full school day. She also meets with the school's wellbeing team each term.

The change it created. Children are more engaged, older children in particular are staying involved, and the service feels more like children's own time after school.

Competency 9.4: Adapts to the service's size, location and community

EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Understands the characteristics of the service's community, including its location, demographics and cultural context.	Adapts educational leadership to the service's size and location, including rural, regional and remote contexts where access to professional learning and support may be limited.	Builds partnerships and networks that overcome isolation and resource constraints. Leads well through significant change, such as new services, mergers or leadership turnover.	Supports educational leaders across diverse contexts, including multiple services under one approved provider.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Rural preschool*

What they used to do. Megan adapted her leadership to a small rural preschool, relying on online learning because face-to-face professional learning was a three-hour drive away. She felt isolated, and the team had little contact with other services.

What they do now. She set up a network with four other small services in the region that meets online each month and in person each term, sharing the cost of professional learning. When her director retired, she helped lead the team through the change, keeping the focus on children.

The change it created. The team now has colleagues beyond its own service, professional learning is more affordable and varied, and the leadership change happened without the program losing direction.



DOMAIN 10: THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER AS PROFESSIONAL



Anchored in Element 4.2.2 and the Early Childhood Australia (2016) Code of Ethics.

This domain concerns the educational leader themselves: their ethics, their own learning, and the conditions that enable them to sustain the role. Educational leaders often carry the role alongside other responsibilities, and much of its load is invisible. Sustaining the leader is a competency, not an afterthought.

IN THIS DOMAIN

10.1 Acts ethically and professionally

10.2 Manages time, priorities and boundaries

10.3 Sustains their own professional learning

10.4 Sustains their own wellbeing

Competency 10.1: Acts ethically and professionally			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Knows the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics and the service's code of conduct, and applies them in practice. Maintains confidentiality and professional boundaries.	Uses ethical frameworks to work through dilemmas and supports educators to do the same. Recognises when ethical issues arise in pedagogy and leadership and addresses them openly.	Leads the team in ethical reflection and decision-making in complex situations. Advocates for children and for ethical practice within the service and organisation.	Contributes to organisational and sector understanding of ethical leadership.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Outside school hours care organisation*

What they used to do. Aaron led his after-school care team in ethical reflection, such as when educators disagreed about whether to stop a challenging game because it involved some risk. He also advocated for children's rights within his organisation.

What they do now. As a senior practice leader, he contributed to his organisation's ethical decision-making guide for school age care. Aaron also runs sessions for coordinators and educational leaders on working through dilemmas using the Code of Ethics.

The change it created. Leaders across the organisation share a process for ethical dilemmas, and their decisions are more consistent, better reasoned and better documented.

Competency 10.2: Manages time, priorities and boundaries			
EMERGING	PRACTISING	LEADING	SYSTEMS LEADER
Plans their time to protect pedagogical leadership from being displaced by operational tasks. Asks for help when demands exceed capacity.	Prioritises strategically, focusing on the actions with the greatest impact on children and educators. Holds boundaries between the educational leader role and other roles they hold.	Advocates for workload arrangements that make the role sustainable for themselves and others. Delegates and distributes leadership effectively.	Supports organisations to design sustainable workloads and structures for educational leaders.

PRACTICE STORY

Emerging to Practising · *Long day care*

What they used to do. Tessa planned her week to protect her educational leader time, but as a room leader as well, she often gave that time away when the room was short-staffed and found it hard to say no.

What they do now. She now chooses the few actions with the greatest impact on children and educators each fortnight, and she has agreed with her director which situations can, and cannot, draw on her educational leader time. She holds clearer boundaries between her two roles.

The change it created. Her educational leader time is used as intended most weeks, and educators receive more consistent support to strengthen their practice.

Competency 10.3: Sustains their own professional learning			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Engages in professional learning relevant to the role and seeks mentoring or supervision. Reads current professional literature.	Maintains a personal professional learning plan linked to this framework. Participates in networks of educational leaders.	Engages in advanced learning, such as postgraduate study, research or coaching training. Contributes to others' learning through mentoring and presenting.	Holds their own mentoring or supervision at a senior level and contributes to the professional learning of the sector.

PRACTICE STORY

Practising to Leading · *Outside school hours care*

What they used to do. Callum kept a professional learning plan linked to this framework and attended a local network of OSHC educational leaders.

What they do now. He enrolled in a postgraduate certificate in leadership and coaching. Callum now presents at the network meetings, and mentors two newer educational leaders from nearby services.

The change it created. His study has deepened his own practice, and what he shares has helped the network grow from an information session into a genuine learning community.

Competency 10.4: Sustains their own wellbeing			
EMERGING	**PRACTISING**	**LEADING**	**SYSTEMS LEADER**
Recognises the emotional demands of the role and the early signs of their own stress or depletion. Uses the support available to them.	Manages their wellbeing deliberately through supervision, peer support and clear boundaries. Seeks help when the emotional load of the role accumulates.	Models sustainable leadership over time and is honest with colleagues about what that requires. Recognises depletion in others and responds.	Attends to the wellbeing of educational leaders across services and advocates for structures that support it.

PRACTICE STORY

Leading to Systems Leader · *Early learning organisation*

What they used to do. Jo had sustained the educational leader role in a busy long day care centre for many years and was honest about the supervision, boundaries and support that made it possible. She noticed when colleagues were depleted and responded.

What they do now. As a pedagogy manager supporting educational leaders across her organisation, she set up regular group supervision and advocated successfully for protected non-contact time in every service.

The change it created. Educational leaders are staying in the role longer, and the organisation now treats their wellbeing as part of quality rather than a private matter.



USING THE FRAMEWORK IN SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

The framework is designed to serve as a working document in regular conversations between an educational leader and the person who supports them, whether that is the nominated supervisor, the approved provider, an organisational leader or an external mentor. Three suggestions are outlined below.

The annual review. Once a year, the educational leader completes the Self-assessment record across the ten domains, marking their current level for each competency. Their supervisor or mentor provides an independent view. The two meet to compare, discuss and agree on focus areas for the coming year, linking them where possible to the Quality Improvement Plan. The agreed focus areas are recorded in the Growth Plan, which provides both parties with a shared development plan and a clear picture of the support the role needs.

The focused conversation. Between annual reviews, support conversations often benefit from focusing on one or two competencies rather than trying to address the whole framework at once. The educational leader names where they want to grow, the supporter helps them see what movement between levels would look like, and the pair agrees on a small experiment for the coming month.

Role design and recruitment. When designating a new educational leader, approved providers can use the Emerging and Practising descriptors to clarify expectations, draft the role statement and plan induction. A newly designated educational leader should not be expected to work at the Practising level on the first day.

A newly designated educational leader should not be expected to work at the Practising level from the first day.

The framework is not intended to be used as a tick-box exercise. If a support conversation feels mechanical, set the framework aside and start again with the actual work of leading the program.

MOVING TO SYSTEMS LEADER

Leading a single service with depth and integrity is a full and valuable career.

The Systems Leader level is not a linear extension of the Leading level; it is a distinct role. Systems Leaders support other educational leaders' practice and shape the conditions in which the role is enacted. Moving into this role usually involves a change in position, such as a pedagogical, quality or practice leadership role across several services, and benefits from deliberate preparation in mentoring, coaching and organisational leadership. Not every Leading educational leader will choose to become a Systems Leader, and not all should. Leading a single service with depth and integrity is a full and valuable career.



SELF-ASSESSMENT RECORD

Use this record to indicate where your practice currently sits for each competency. Read the four descriptors in the framework before ticking, and choose the level that best describes your practice most of the time, not on your best day. Tick one box per competency. Use the final column to note the evidence that supports your judgement, such as examples of practice, documentation, feedback from educators or families, or outcomes of the Quality Improvement Plan.

When the record is used in an annual review, the educational leader and their supervisor or mentor can each complete a copy and compare them. Differences are a starting point for conversation, not a disagreement to be resolved.

Name	
Service	
Role and time in role	
Date completed	
Completed with (if applicable)	

Domain 1: Understanding the Role and its Mandate					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
1.1 Understands the regulatory and quality mandate of the role	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.2 Clarifies and negotiates the scope of the role	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.3 Works in partnership with the approved provider and service leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	
1.4 Leads through influence and relationship	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 2: Curriculum and Pedagogical Leadership					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
2.1 Holds deep knowledge of the approved learning frameworks	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.2 Leads intentional, play-based learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.3 Leads an inclusive and equitable program	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.4 Grounds the program in theory and evidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.5 Connects the program to the service philosophy	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2.6 Embeds sustainability in the program	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 3: Leading the Assessment and Planning Cycle					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
3.1 Leads the assessment and planning cycle across the service	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.2 Supports purposeful and meaningful documentation	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.3 Evaluates the program as a whole	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3.4 Supports continuity of learning and transitions	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 4: Building Educator Capability					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
4.1 Mentors and coaches educators	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 4: Building Educator Capability					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
4.2 Observes practice and offers feedback that grows practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.3 Designs and leads professional learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.4 Supports educators across qualifications and career stages	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4.5 Builds distributed and collaborative leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 5: Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
5.1 Practises critical reflection	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.2 Leads critical reflection with teams	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.3 Builds a professional learning community	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.4 Leads inquiry into practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5.5 Contributes to self-assessment and quality improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 6: Child Safety, Wellbeing and Rights					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
6.1 Embeds children's safety, rights and best interests in the program	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6.2 Leads safe and ethical use of digital technologies and images	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 6: Child Safety, Wellbeing and Rights					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
6.3 Supports children's agency, voice and participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6.4 Leads relational, trauma-aware practice for wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 7: Partnerships with Families and Communities					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
7.1 Makes the program visible and meaningful to families	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7.2 Builds partnerships with families in children's learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7.3 Collaborates with community, schools and support professionals	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 8: Cultural Responsiveness and First Nations Perspectives					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
8.1 Embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with integrity	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8.2 Leads culturally responsive practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	
8.3 Examines bias and works for equity	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 9: Leading in Context					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
9.1 Leads in long day care, preschool and kindergarten settings	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9.2 Leads in family day care	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9.3 Leads in outside school hours care	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9.4 Adapts to the service's size, location and community	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Domain 10: The Educational Leader as Professional					
Competency	**Emerging**	**Practising**	**Leading**	**Systems Leader**	**Evidence and notes**
10.1 Acts ethically and professionally	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10.2 Manages time, priorities and boundaries	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10.3 Sustains their own professional learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10.4 Sustains their own wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Summary

Where are my strongest areas of practice?	
Which competencies feel most important to grow next, and why?	
What patterns do I notice across the domains?	
What support does my role need to make growth possible?	



GROWTH PLAN

Use this plan to move from your current level to the next in two or three focus competencies. Choose competencies from your self-assessment that matter most for children, your team, and your service's Quality Improvement Plan. For each one, read the descriptor for the level above your current level and describe, in your own words, what that would look like in your service. Then plan the small, concrete steps that will get you there.

Keep the plan short and realistic. Growth in one competency over a term is worth more than ten intentions. Review the plan with your supervisor or mentor at the agreed check-in dates and update it as your practice evolves.

Name	
Service	
Supervisor or mentor	
Plan start date	
Review date	

Focus area 1	
Competency (number and name)	
Current level	
Target level	
What practice at the next level would look like in my service	
Why this matters now (for children, educators and the service)	

Focus area 1	
Actions I will take	
Support I need and who will provide it	
Evidence I will gather to show progress	
Timeframe and check-in dates	

Focus area 2	
Competency (number and name)	
Current level	
Target level	
What practice at the next level would look like in my service	
Why this matters now (for children, educators and the service)	
Actions I will take	
Support I need and who will provide it	
Evidence I will gather to show progress	

Focus area 2	
Timeframe and check-in dates	

Focus area 3	
Competency (number and name)	
Current level	
Target level	
What practice at the next level would look like in my service	
Why this matters now (for children, educators and the service)	
Actions I will take	
Support I need and who will provide it	
Evidence I will gather to show progress	
Timeframe and check-in dates	

Review of the plan

Review	
What progress have I made in each focus area?	
What did I learn about my practice and leadership?	
What got in the way, and what helped?	
Has my level changed? If so, what is the evidence?	
What will I focus on next?	
Educational leader signature and date	
Supervisor or mentor signature and date	



APPENDIX A: REGULATORY AND FRAMEWORK MAP

For quick reference, the main regulatory and framework anchors for each domain.

Domain 1 (Understanding the Role and its Mandate): Regulations 118 and 148; Standard 7.2; Element 7.2.2

Domain 2 (Curriculum and Pedagogical Leadership): EYLF V2.0, My Time, Our Place V2.0 and the VEYLDF; Quality Area 1; Element 7.1.1

Domain 3 (Leading the Assessment and Planning Cycle): Element 7.2.2; Elements 1.3.1 and 1.3.3; Regulations 73 to 76

Domain 4 (Building Educator Capability): Elements 7.2.2 and 7.2.3; Standard 4.2; Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Domain 5 (Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement): Element 1.3.2; Elements 7.2.1 and 7.2.2; Regulation 55

Domain 6 (Child Safety, Wellbeing and Rights): National Law paramount consideration (from 27 February 2026); Element 2.2.3; Standard 7.1 and Element 7.1.2 (as refined from 1 January 2026); Standard 5.1

Domain 7 (Partnerships with Families and Communities): Quality Area 6; Element 1.3.3; Regulations 75 and 76

Domain 8 (Cultural Responsiveness and First Nations Perspectives): Principles of the approved learning frameworks; Element 1.1.2

Domain 9 (Leading in Context): The Educational Leader Resource and its family day care and outside school hours care addenda; My Time, Our Place V2.0

Domain 10 (The Educational Leader as Professional): Element 4.2.2; Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

APPENDIX B: A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Throughout this framework, the term *educational leader* refers to the person designated under regulation 118. Some services and organisations use other titles, such as *pedagogical leader* or *curriculum leader*, and some share the role among more than one person. The framework applies to the role regardless of its title. The term *educator* refers to all staff working directly with children, including early childhood teachers. In family day care, *educator* refers to the family day care educator, and *coordinator refers* to the family day care coordinator. In outside school hours care, references to the program and to children's learning include the leisure, play and wellbeing focus of My Time, Our Place.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and communities may find that terms drawn from their own traditions, such as yarning, story sharing and relational learning, more accurately describe this work than the language of leadership frameworks. The framework welcomes and supports that reframing.



APPENDIX C: REFERENCES

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Educational leadership is a practice, not a title.

The Semann & Slattery Educational Leader Competency Framework supports educational leaders, approved providers and directors in early childhood and outside school hours care services to grow leadership that strengthens programs for children.

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