

# Pondering Practice: Critical Reflection

## OVERVIEW

Together, we explore, break down and demystify the beast known as critical reflection. This session supports educators to feel confident and comfortable understanding and embedding reflective practice in meaningful, practical ways.

Participants reflect on their own strengths, biases and tacit knowledge that shape everyday pedagogical and professional decisions and take proactive steps to welcome and support all families, children and young people in culturally safe and inclusive ways. The program builds educator confidence in creating engaging, inclusive environments, recognising the needs of children and young people, and using critical reflection to strengthen responsive practice.

Achievable, real-world strategies to embed reflection into daily practice are workshopped to support a genuine Thinking Curriculum – where educators, children and young people co-construct experiences and meaning. Educators deepen their understanding of critically reflective practice and explore their knowledge, pedagogy and professional practice to refine their work for the benefit of all children and young people.

## WE WILL...

- Demystify critical reflection together and explore what makes reflection critical rather than simply descriptive.
- Unpack how legislation, frameworks and philosophy shape reflective practice and influence professional decisions with children, young people and families.
- Examine how reflective practice strengthens inclusion, responsive and individualised approaches, and the ability to meet the needs of each child and young person through a humanistic, needs-based lens.
- Explore real-world strategies that build a culture of a Thinking Curriculum, where educators, children and young people co-construct experiences and meaning.
- Grow confidence in weaving reflective practice through program design, environments, relationships and professional identity.

### DELIVERY MODE OFFERINGS:

1. Self-paced online course
2. Face-to-face workshops (2-4 hours)
3. Live online webinar

*“The information was relatable and gave educators an understanding of the importance of critical reflection and how if you are going through A&R you need to start this and collate ASAP. As a sector simple ways of documenting this were discussed.”*

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## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

By the end of this workshop, participants will possess:

1. Increased clarity and confidence in what critical reflection is and how to apply it meaningfully each day.
2. A stronger understanding of how the EYLF, NQF, VEYLDF, MTOP and legislation guide reflective practice.
3. Greater confidence in co-constructing thinking and learning with children as partners in reflection.
4. Deeper insight into personal biases, assumptions, and tacit knowledge, supporting culturally safe and inclusive practice.
5. A rich toolkit of strategies, ideas, and reflective processes to strengthen high-quality, intentional pedagogy.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

### **Thinking Curriculum Dr V. Jean Russell**

A 'Thinking Curriculum' emphasises learning environments where children and educators co-construct meaning, inquiry, and reflective dialogue together. The workshop cultivates this through reflective practice as embedded elements in everyday pedagogy and decision-making.

### **Learning Circles for Educators Engaged in Study Dr Jennifer Cartmel**

Professional learning is a collaborative, dialogic, and inquiry-driven process. This underpins the workshop's use of shared reflection, discussion, and professional enquiry to build collective understanding and strengthen team culture.

### **Tacit Knowledge & Bias Collins (2010) & Kinsella (2007)**

Tacit knowledge is the unspoken beliefs, experiences and assumptions that shape practice. These internal influences must be examined to ensure ethical, equitable decision making. The workshop supports educators to recognise and unpack their own tacit knowledge and bias.

### **Four-Step Reflection Process John Smyth**

Smyth's model; Describe, Inform, Confront and Reconstruct, provides a clear structure for analytical reflection. This process informs the workshop's reflective framework, guiding educators into transformative, practice changing reflection.

## KEY LINKS – NATIONAL

### Alignment with National Quality Standard

- **QA1** – Educational Program and Practice (Elements 1.1.1, 1.3.2): strengthens critically reflective, program decisions that respond meaningfully to children’s identities, needs, and ways of learning.
- **QA4** – Staffing Arrangements (Elements 4.2.1, 4.2.2): fosters collaborative, enquiry-driven team cultures that embeds shared reflection, professionalism, and collective decision-making.
- **QA7** – Governance and Leadership (Elements 7.2.1, 7.2.3): embeds reflective practice in continuous improvement, informed decision-making, and exceeding-level pedagogical leadership.

### Alignment with EYLF v2.0

#### Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships: Reflective practice deepens educators’ awareness of how biases, assumptions and interactions shape everyday practice.
- Ongoing learning and reflective practice: The course strengthens educators’ capacity to critically analyse decisions, refine pedagogy and engage in continuous improvement.

#### Practices

- Holistic, integrated approaches: Reflection considers the whole child, recognising how identity, culture, emotions and learning needs influence participation and engagement.
- Intentionality: Critical reflection informs purposeful, inclusive, culturally safe pedagogy.

#### Learning Outcomes

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity: Reflective practice supports environments where children feel valued, recognised and supported as capable, unique learners.
- Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing: Reflective, responsive strategies support emotional regulation, safety, and inclusive participation.

### Alignment with MTOP v2.0

#### Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships: Reflective practice deepens educators’ awareness of how biases, assumptions and interactions shape everyday practice and relationships with children and young people.
- Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning: The course strengthens educators’ capacity to critically analyse decisions, refine professional practice and engage in continuous improvement to support wellbeing, inclusion and participation.

#### Practices

- Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches: Reflection considers the whole child and young person, recognising how identity, culture, emotions and lived experiences influence participation, engagement and wellbeing.
- Play, leisure and intentionality: Critical reflection informs purposeful, inclusive and culturally safe practice that supports meaningful experiences, agency and belonging.

#### Outcomes

- Outcome 1 – Children and young people have a strong sense of identity
- Reflective practice supports environments where children and young people feel valued, recognised and supported as capable, unique individuals.
- Outcome 3 – Children and young people have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Reflective, responsive strategies support emotional regulation, safety, resilience and inclusive participation.

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## KEY LINKS – NATIONAL CONTINUED

### Alignment with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- **Standard 1.5** – Know learners and how they learn: reflection supports deeper insight into children’s strengths, needs, cultural identities, and diverse ways of learning.
- **Standard 3.2** – Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning: critical reflection strengthens intentional and responsive practice that enhances program quality.
- **Standard 7.2** – Comply with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements: strengthens understanding of legal and regulatory expectations regarding critical reflection within the NQF.

### Alignment with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- **Principle 1** – Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. Critical reflection supports upholding children’s rights, safety, inclusion and wellbeing.
- **Principle 2** – Children are safe, informed and participate in decisions affecting them. Reflective practice supports children as active contributors to shape programs, environments and experiences.
- **Principle 3** – Families and communities are informed and involved. Transparent, reflective communication with families and support culturally safe, collaborative partnerships.
- **Principle 5** – People working with children are suitable and supported. Educators develop reflective awareness, relational competence and cultural responsiveness.
- **Principle 6** – Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused. Critical reflection shifts practice from blame or compliance to understanding needs, experiences and contexts, promoting compassionate, child-centred responses.

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## KEY LINKS - QLD

### Alignment with the Kindy Uplift Key Priority Areas

#### **Social & Emotional Skills**

- Encourages educators to reflect on how their interactions, expectations and environments support children's emotional safety and co-regulation.
- Strengthens educator capability to respond thoughtfully to children's cues, behaviours and wellbeing needs.
- Promotes reflective decision-making that nurtures resilience, confidence and positive peer relationships.

#### **Access & Inclusion**

- Supports educators to examine their own beliefs, biases and assumptions to ensure inclusive, culturally safe practice.
- Helps educators identify and remove barriers to participation through reflective adjustments to routines, environments and expectations.
- Builds a deeper understanding of how to actively welcome, value and support all children and families.

#### **Oral Language & Communication**

- Encourages educators to reflect on the quality, tone and intent of their communication with children.
- Strengthens serve-and-return interactions and responsive dialogue through reflective practice.
- Supports children's expressive and receptive language by refining educator communication strategies.

### Alignment with QKLG

#### **Identity**

- Encourages educators to reflect on how their beliefs, expectations and decisions shape children's sense of self.
- Builds environments where children feel valued, respected and confident in who they are.

#### **Wellbeing**

- Deepens educator understanding of how reflective practice supports emotional safety, co-regulation and wellbeing.
- Enables educators to refine interactions and environments so children experience calm, predictable and supportive learning spaces.

#### **Active Learning**

- Supports reflective decision-making that enhances curiosity, engagement and problem-solving.
- Encourages educators to use reflective cycles to create rich, responsive learning environments that foster persistence and exploration.

#### **Connectedness**

- Promotes thoughtful reflection on how practice supports children's relationships, empathy and inclusive participation.
- Helps educators strengthen children's sense of belonging and their connections with people, place and community.

## KEY LINKS – VIC

### School Readiness Funding Menu

Please note this workshop is not on the SRF menu. It can however be utilised under flexible funding provisions. For more information on flexible funding go to the Victorian Department of Education website here:



For more information on the Phoenix Support SRF offerings, including those on the menu as well as flexible funding options, head to our website here:



### Alignment with the SRF Priority Areas for use under Flexible Funding Options

#### Access & Inclusion

- Strengthens educators' ability to reflect on biases, assumptions and decision-making that impact children's access and experiences.

#### Social & Emotional Learning

- Deepens educator insight into how reflective practice shapes emotional safety, co-regulation and relational trust.
- Helps educators refine interactions and environments to nurture positive relationships and social competence.

#### Learning & Teaching (Professional Reflection)

- Builds educator capability to analyse practice, adapt strategies and respond thoughtfully to children's diverse learning needs.
- Strengthens reflective cycles that improve the quality of planning, documentation and pedagogy.
- Supports continuous improvement that enhances engagement, curiosity and learning outcomes for all children.

### Alignment with the VEYLDF

#### Outcome 1: Identity

- Builds reflective, intentional environments where children feel valued, respected and understood.
- Strengthens children's sense of self by supporting educators to recognise how their own beliefs, biases and decisions shape children's experiences.

#### Outcome 3: Wellbeing

- Deepens educator understanding of how reflective practice enhances emotional safety, co-regulation and wellbeing.
- Supports children's resilience, regulation and healthy coping as educators refine practices based on thoughtful reflection.

#### Outcome 4: Learning

- Encourages educators to engage in reflective cycles that strengthen inquiry, problem-solving and responsive teaching.
- Promotes rich, engaging learning environments where children and educators co-construct knowledge through curiosity and critical thinking.