

Flow Pedagogy

Supporting Deep Engagement in Early Learning



OVERVIEW

This workshop invites educators to explore the concept of flow as a powerful pedagogical tool for designing learning environments that foster deep engagement, intrinsic motivation, and joy in learning. Drawing from Positive Psychology research on flow and the Phoenix Cups® Framework, participants will reflect on how children enter states of flow, what developmental and environmental conditions make this possible, and how educators can intentionally cultivate spaces where wellbeing and learning naturally thrive.

Through rich discussion, practical examples, and hands-on reflective activities, participants will connect the theory of flow to their everyday practice, gaining practical tools to embed flow as a lens for curriculum design, environmental planning, and relational pedagogy. By the end of the session, educators will feel more confident recognising moments of flow and supporting children to engage deeply, purposefully, and joyfully in their learning.

WE WILL...

- Explore the concept of flow in early childhood and how children's regulation, rhythms and engagement states shape deep learning.
- Unpack how environments, routines and transitions impact children's ability to enter and sustain flow, using real examples and practical activities.
- Examine evidence, theory and neuroscience linking emotional safety, autonomy and uninterrupted play to children's wellbeing and learning.
- Identify practical strategies for reducing stressors, increasing autonomy and designing flexible learning spaces that support sustained engagement.
- Engage in shared critical reflection to explore how flow-based approaches can be embedded into your unique program, routines and context.

DELIVERY MODE OFFERINGS:

- Self-paced online course
- Full-day face-to-face session (up to 5 hours)
- After-hours in-service workshops with teams (up to 2.5 hours)

Contact us to book your workshop [HERE](#).

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PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Define flow pedagogy and explain its relevance to children's learning, wellbeing, and development.
2. Identify the conditions that support flow – balance of challenge and skill, uninterrupted time, environments rich in curiosity and possibility.
4. Link flow to children's needs using the Phoenix Cups® Framework, seeing flow as a state where multiple cups are filled simultaneously.
3. Recognise flow moments in practice and reflect on how to extend or protect them.
5. Embed flow into planning and pedagogy, aligning practice with NQF expectations around child-centred, strengths-based, and relational learning.
6. Reflect critically on their own teaching practice, considering how routines, environments, and educator responses can either block or enable flow.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Theoretical underpinnings:

Flow Theory

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

A state of flow is achieved when challenge and skill are balanced, creating optimal learning conditions that support intrinsic motivation, deep engagement and sustained attention.

Positive Psychology

Martin Seligman & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Flow aligns with the science of flourishing, emphasising wellbeing, meaning and deep engagement as central to learning and professional growth.

Self Determination Theory

Edward Deci & Richard Ryan

Flow states meet the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. When Self Determination Theory needs are met, Flow becomes possible, supporting intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement.

The Phoenix Cups® Framework

Sandi Phoenix

Children are most likely to experience flow when their needs are considered and their cups are filled. The positive state of wellbeing experienced through flow, reflects our met needs. Flow can be seen as a multi-cup filler.



KEY LINKS – NATIONAL

Alignment with National Quality Standard

- QA1 – Educational Program and Practice (Elements 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.3): promotes child-led learning, deep engagement, and responsive teaching.
- QA3 – Physical Environment (Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3): aligns with the design of environments that promote sustained play, independence, and sensory-rich engagement.
- QA5 – Relationships with Children (Elements 5.1.2, 5.2.2): strengthens co-regulation, relational safety, and connection-filled interactions, ensuring children feel secure to explore deeply.

Alignment with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Standard 1.2 – Know learners and how they learn: recognises children's rhythms, regulation, and individual needs to support deep engagement.
- Standard 3.3 – Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning: enables flexible, play-rich programs that minimise transitions and respond to children's cues.
- Standard 4.1 – Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments: promotes predictable, low-stress environments where children feel secure to explore and learn.

Alignment with EYLF v2.0

Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships: builds relational safety and co-regulation to support sustained engagement.
- Holistic, integrated teaching and learning: acknowledges that wellbeing, relationships, and learning strengthen each other through uninterrupted play.

Practices

- Responsive and meaningful interactions: educators tune into children's cues to extend and sustain engagement.
- Supportive learning environments: flexible, low-stress spaces minimise transitions and promote self-directed exploration.

Learning Outcome

- Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners: flow states nurture persistence, curiosity, and agency through uninterrupted, meaningful play.

Alignment with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- Principle 1 – Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture: promotes emotionally safe, predictable, low-stress environments where children's wellbeing guides decision-making and program design.
- Principle 2 – Children are safe, informed and participate in decisions affecting them: by honouring children's cues, rhythms, agency, and autonomy, flow pedagogy strengthens meaningful participation and voice in daily learning.
- Principle 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice: ensures learning experiences adapt to each child's developmental, sensory, cultural and emotional needs, reducing barriers to engagement.

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KEY LINKS – QLD

Alignment with the Kindy Uplift Key Priority Areas

Social & Emotional Skills

- Strengthens educator understanding of children's regulation, engagement rhythms, and stress responses.
- Builds capability in co-regulation, attuned interactions, and supporting children back into "flow," through predictable yet flexible environments where children feel emotionally safe to explore and learn.

Access & Inclusion

- Promotes relational, needs-based and trauma-informed practices that reduce barriers to participation.
- Supports educators to adapt environments, routines, and expectations to honour diverse developmental and sensory needs and ensures equitable engagement by reducing overwhelm, waiting, and transition-related stress.

Physical & Gross Motor Skills

- Encourages movement-rich, uninterrupted play where children naturally regulate through proprioceptive and vestibular experiences. Acknowledging physical engagement supports improved wellbeing, focus, and sustained learning.
- Supports educators to design spaces that promote autonomous, purposeful movement throughout the day.

Oral Language & Communication

- Enhances opportunities for meaningful, connection-rich dialogue by reducing rushed transitions and improving engagement windows through supporting serve-and-return interactions during deep play and exploration.

Alignment with QKLG

Wellbeing

- Deepens educator understanding of regulation, engagement rhythms, and stress responses so children experience emotional safety and co-regulation.
- Builds children's capacity for resilience, emotional regulation, and wellbeing by supporting uninterrupted play and reduced transition pressure.

Identity

- Creates predictable, relationally safe environments where children feel secure, valued, and able to lead their learning.

Connectedness

- Promotes empathy, cooperation, and positive peer relationships by supporting children's sustained interactions within shared play.
- Encourages inclusive, respectful engagement as children navigate social learning within flow-based environments.

Active Learning

- Reduces stress and cognitive load so children can engage deeply in exploration, problem-solving, and imaginative play.
- Supports persistence, curiosity, and confident participation through uninterrupted learning experiences that build focus and engagement.

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

- Reduces barriers to engagement by minimising overwhelm, long waits, and transition-heavy routines.
- Ensures children feel safe, included, and able to participate meaningfully through flexible, predictable learning environments.

Wellbeing (Social & Emotional Skills)

- Strengthens children's emotional regulation and coping skills by reducing stress triggers and supporting flow states.
- Creates predictable, nurturing environments where children feel secure, connected, and ready to learn.

Self-Regulation

- Supports educators to recognise early cues of dysregulation and respond with attuned, co-regulating strategies.
- Helps children move back into calm, focused states through uninterrupted play and sensory-rich engagement.
- Reduces behavioural challenges by meeting core needs and creating low-stress, autonomy-supportive routines.

Alignment with VELDYF

Outcome 1: Identity

- Builds predictable, attuned environments where children feel valued, respected and safe to lead their learning.
- Strengthens children's sense of self through responsive, autonomy-supportive practice.

Outcome 3: Wellbeing

- Deepens educator understanding of regulation, stress and emotions as foundations for wellbeing.
- Supports children's resilience and emotional regulation through reduced stressors and co-regulating interactions.

Outcome 4: Learning

- Encourages responsive, reflective practice that strengthens inquiry, problem-solving and engagement.
- Promotes uninterrupted, rich learning environments where children explore deeply and persist with curiosity.