



LEARNING STORIES – How we use them at Blackwood Community Children's Centre

What are Learning Stories?

Learning stories are an assessment tool used to describe a child's learning process and are also a way of documenting that learning. Using a storytelling format to capture the meaningful elements which influence a child's learning process. Learning stories are particularly effective in illustrating how children cope with challenges, resolve conflicts and persist when faced with difficulty. The elements which can be described in a Learning story include the child's:

- **Interest, strengths and achievements**
- **Skills, knowledge and feelings**
- **Interactions with peers and adults**
- **Family, heritage, culture and community.**

Learning stories use a qualitative approach to observing children's learning. This enables educators to use their professional judgement to interpret children's learning habits (known as dispositions) based on the educators knowledge and observations of the children and their interest. Educators recognise the learning that is taking place for children in their play and are therefore able to describe this learning in the context of their play. This also helps educators to evaluate and plan for further experiences to extend a child's learning based around their interests and strengths.

Each Learning story should connect and relate to other stories about the children as well as with stories about the group of children in the service – they build on one another to create a whole picture of children's learning. This is why learning stories are often referred to as a 'credit' rather than a 'deficit' model to assessing children's learning.

Learning stories become an engaging and positive way of assessing children's development and recognising the child as a competent and active participant in their learning journey.

Why are they important and what is their value?

Learning stories are a holistic approach to assessing and documenting children's learning. They also meet many of the requirements of our quality assurance. They:

- **Reinforce the importance of play**
- **Highlight the influence and contribution of family, culture and community**
- **Value the process of observation, assessment and evaluation when planning for children's experiences**
- **Promotes planning for individual or groups of children**
- **Encourages regular and ongoing observations of children's learning**
- **Make connections between the learning and their environment**
- **Identify the child as a capable, active and competent participant in their own learning.**

Each story is a reflection of the individual child's learning and as such no two stories are the same.

At Blackwood our educators will use the following to document learning stories

- **Written or computer generated narratives**
- **Children's artwork**
- **Photographs and diagrams**
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Learning stories can build an understanding between what is happening at home and in care and provides families and educators with an insight into how children learn in different settings.

All educators who are responsible for primary care children have non-contact time to write learning stories and to plan and evaluate their programs. Staff enjoy writing the stories and sharing them with the children and their families. We expect that families will read them and sign and make comment on the parent voice section. Staff also are grateful for feedback and for families to write their own stories, add photos and information about what the child is enjoying and learning at home.

The learning stories belong to your child so feel free to take them home to share with family and friends and don't forget to bring them back so that staff can add to them.

Janine McLoughlin

Director

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References and further reading:

- Carr, M (2003) Assessment in early childhood settings: Learning stories London SAGE Publications
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009) belonging, being and becoming – the Early years learning framework for Australia. Canberra
- New Zealand Ministry of Education (2009) Becoming friend, becoming learner
- www.acecqa.gov.au