

Celebrations and Special Events Policy Guidelines

Celebrations and Special Events

BPA supports the acknowledgement and celebration of those events that are special and important to our educators, families, children and community. These special events and celebrations may be based around cultural beliefs, families' backgrounds and also events that are more personal to children (such as learning to ride a bike, losing a tooth etc.)

Whilst we understand the importance of acknowledging and celebrating these events it is our expectation that they are relevant to the context of the service. Celebrations and Special Events must be inclusive, respectful, age appropriate and meaningful. It is an expectation that children who do not wish to participate or who cannot participate due to their family's beliefs, are catered for and their choices are respected.

How do you decide what to celebrate at your service each year?

Decisions in regards to what you will celebrate will vary from year to year. These decisions will be based around your knowledge of the children, families and community that you work with. This knowledge will be gained through a variety of different mediums such as conversations with families, enrolment forms, 'About Me' forms, observations, collaboration, critical reflection and relationships.

As educators and professionals the curriculum decisions that we make are based on professional standards, such as the Early Years Learning Frameworks, National Quality Standards and your service philosophy. Whilst your decisions will be informed by the children and families, your final decisions regarding how this is represented within your program will reflect the need for children's agency, be developmentally appropriate and demonstrate respect for all children.

How to ensure that celebrations are appropriate?

Not all celebrations will be appropriate for your group or your service. This may vary from year to year and needs to be considered carefully. Educators need to be reflective in their thinking when making decisions around what is and is not appropriate. Reflective practice may occur in groups or individually but should be discussed within your team before the final decisions are made.

In order to ensure celebrations are appropriate educators will complete an 'Educational Rationale.' Thing to be considered in Educational Rationales include;

- The context of the service
- Planned activities are appropriate to the development of the children
- Are planned activities/experiences age appropriate
- The event is inclusive
- Are the planned activities/experiences welcoming
- Parents have been consulted
- Children have choice to participate or not participate
- Children have had input
- The event is relevant
- It is meaningful
- It is safe (Risk Management Plan has been completed)
- It is culturally safe
- The celebration is respectful

When planning specific experiences and activities involved in celebrations and events, the following strategies will help you to determine whether it is developmentally appropriate and inclusive.

- Use of the Educational Rationale
- Research
- Ensuring that children are offered choice
- There is a 'back up plan' for children who do not want to participate
- A variety of options offered for children
- Knowing the context of your service
- It aligns with BPA policies and procedures
- Sharing decision making with other educators, children and families
- It aligns with professional standards such as the NQS, EYLF, VEYLDF and the service Philosophy
- *There are clear intentions for children's learning*

A risk assessment must be completed for any events and celebrations that may include additional risks. This will include events/celebrations that are outside of normal hours, where families will be attending, when cooking is involved, incursions etc. Risk assessments must be completed and sent to Early Years Advisors two weeks prior to the event or celebration.

What do we do after an event or celebration?

It is important to ensure that service events and celebrations are evaluated once they have been completed. As we do with all aspects of curriculum, we must evaluate the value of these experiences. Critical reflection plays a crucial role in evaluation and ongoing improvement. Consider the following;

- Did everything go to plan?
- Did anything unexpected happen?
- Did the children/families enjoy the event/celebration?
- Would you do this again?
- If you do it again, would you make any changes/improvements?
- If we asked families to attend, how many were able to attend?
- What learning took place?
- Are their opportunities moving forward to scaffold children's learning based on this celebration/event?

Evaluations need to be documented as part of your Educational Rationale and should be available upon request.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with BPA's Curriculum Guidelines for Creative Art Experiences wherever art activities are planned as part of your celebration or event. These documents work together to ensure developmentally appropriate curriculum decisions are made and offered to children at all times.